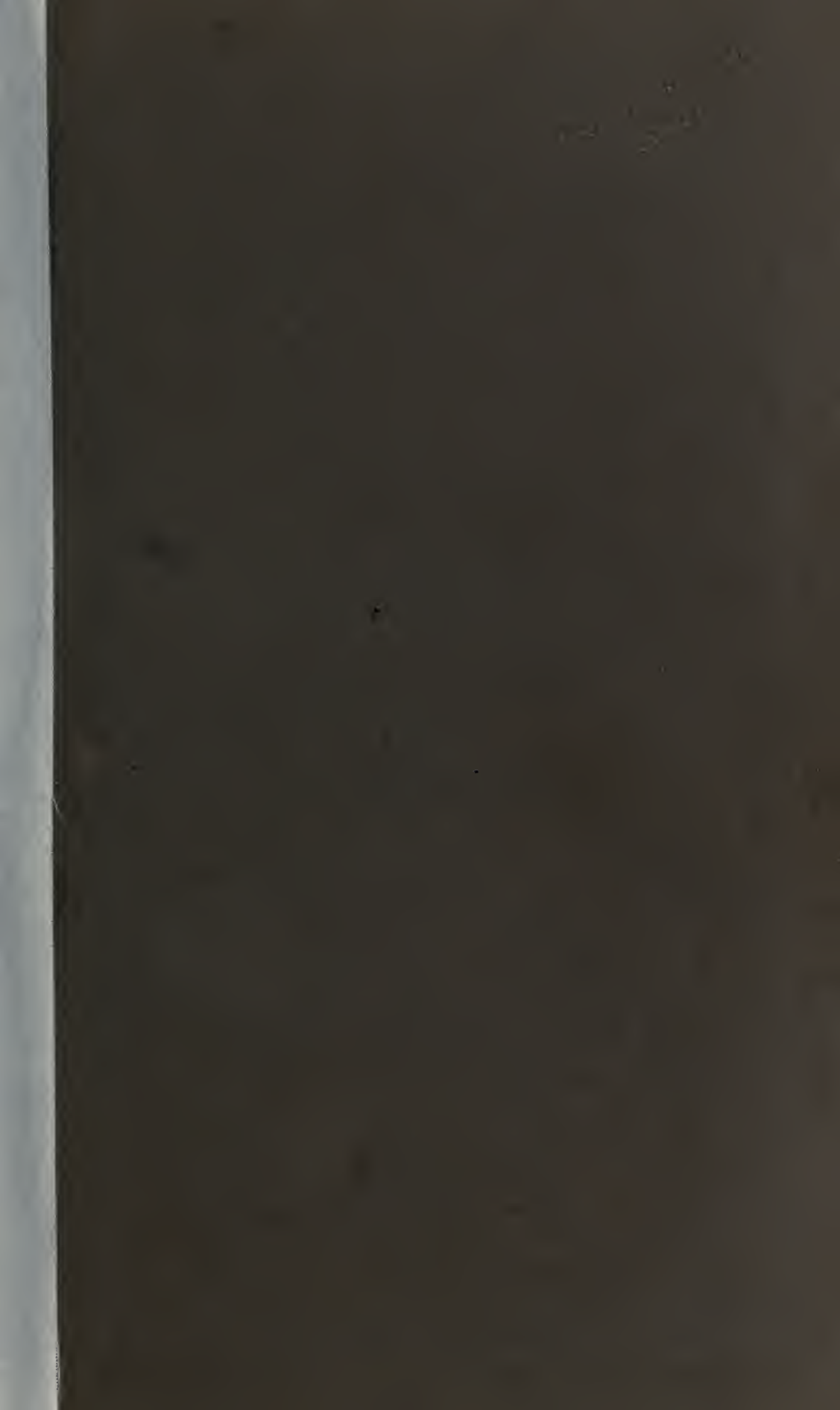




CHURCH SERMONS
BY
EMINENT CLERGYMEN





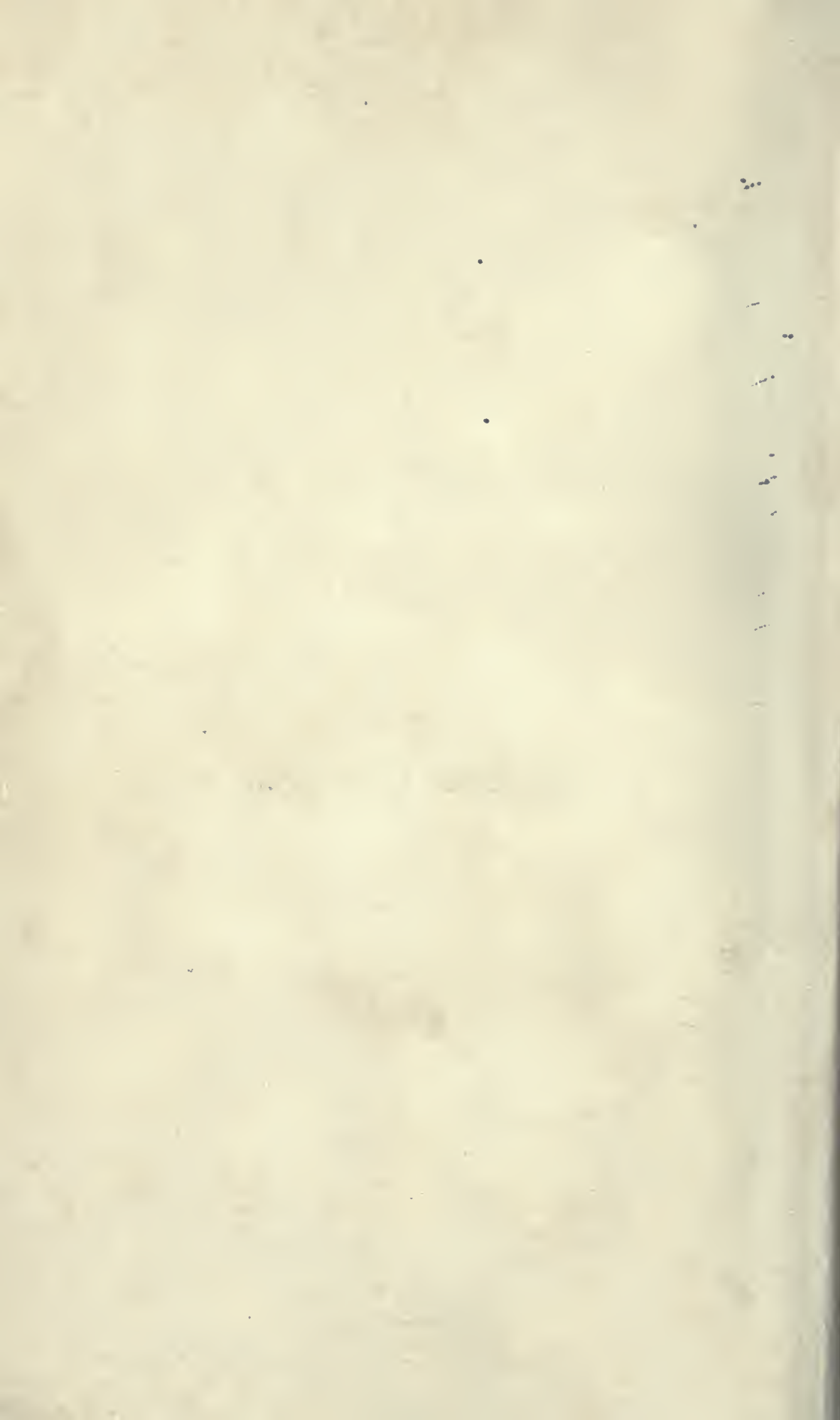
1975

04

CHURCH SERMONS

BY

Eminent Clergymen.





CHURCH
SERMONS

BY

Aminant
CLERGYMEN.



332042
10. 10. 36.

LONDON.

PUBLISHED BY REEVES, SON & CO

PLAYHOUSE YARD, LUDGATE HILL.

1872

VOL. I.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

P R E F A C E.

OUR desire as Publishers of "CHURCH SERMONS" has been to gratify a wish felt by very many persons, for a Serial in which Sermons in danger of being lost to the world might be preserved.

Thousands of the noblest Sermons have been thus lost, either because they were preached *extempore*, and only remembered imperfectly, even by the Preachers themselves, or, when elaborately prepared were never published, owing to the pressure of other duties which precluded the bestowal of the necessary time and labour. To guard against a loss so much to be deprecated, we have originated the Serial of which this is the First Volume.

Conscious of being free from all party spirit in the selection of the Eminent Clergymen whose

Sermons we publish, we feel secure in appealing for encouragement and support to the great body of the Anglican Church.

It gives us great pleasure to state that on our roll of Subscribers are the names of many of the Clergy and Laity—not only in the United Kingdom but also in India and America, who are thus placed *en rapport* with the utterances of England's great Divines.

We gladly take the opportunity of here recording our sincere thanks for the cordial assistance rendered us by those Clergymen, whose brilliant and scholarly discourses are here presented.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF WINCHESTER, <i>St. Luke viii, 45, 46...</i> <i>Samuel Wilberforce, D.D.</i>		1
THE VERY REV. DEAN OF WESTMINSTER, <i>Matthew xxii, 20, 21</i> <i>Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D.</i>		10
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF LONDON, <i>Ephesians iv, 20-24...</i> <i>John Jackson, D.D.</i>		17
THE REV. J. W. GLEADALL, M.A. <i>Psalms cxxxix, 1, 2 ...</i>		27
THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L. <i>St. Matthew xxi, 10...</i>		33
THE REV. E. G. CHARLESWORTH. <i>St. Matthew iv, 1.....</i>		46
VERY REV. HUGH MOFFATT, M.A. <i>Psalms xvi, 11</i>		49
THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A. <i>St. Luke xxiii, 39-43</i>		57
THE REV. A. B. EVANS, D.D. <i>2 Peter ii, 10.....</i>		65
THE REV. W. C. HEATON, B.A. <i>Hebrews xiii, 5.....</i>		73
THE REV. H. R. HAWIES, M.A. <i>.....</i>		81
THE REV. E. G. CHARLESWORTH. <i>Matthew iii, 1</i>		91
THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L. <i>1 Timothy iii, 16</i>		97
THE VERY REV. DEAN OF WESTMINSTER, <i>Luke ii, 40.....</i> <i>Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D.</i>		108
THE VERY REV. DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, <i>Galatians iv, 1, 2</i> <i>R. W. Church, M.A.</i>		113
THE REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A. <i>1. Chron. xxix, 20 ...</i>		119
THE REV. W. ROBINSON CLARK, M.A. <i>John ii, 11.....</i>		129
THE REV. RICHARD GLOVER, M.A. <i>Acts xii, 5</i>		139
THE REV. G. H. WILKINSON, M.A. <i>2 Corinthians v, 14 ...</i>		145
THE REV. W. W. LANE, D.D., F.R.G.S., F.R.S.L. <i>Jude 20</i>		153
THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L. <i>Genesis i, 1</i>		161
THE VERY REV. DEAN OF WESTMINSTER, <i>Geneses i, 3</i> <i>Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D.</i>		171
THE REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A. <i>St. Matthew xviii, 3, and St. Luke xviii, 17</i>		177
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF LONDON, <i>Romans viii, 10</i> <i>John Jackson, D.D.</i>		185
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF HEREFORD, <i>Genesis vi, 3.....</i> <i>James Atlay, D.D.</i>		193

		PAGE
THE REV. RICHARD WHITTINGTON, M.A.	2 Corinthians x, 4 ...	203
HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY	Rom. xii, 5	209
<i>Right Hon. Archibald Campbell Tait, D.D., D.C.L.</i>		
THE REV. PROFESSOR JOWETT, M.A.	John iv, 21	215
THE REV. JAMES MOORHOUSE, M.A.	Ecclesiastes ii, 1.....	225
THE REV. JAMES FULLER RUSSELL, B.C.L., F.S.A.	James i, 19, 20.....	233
THE REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.	Genesis ix, 5, 6	241
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF ROCHESTER, <i>Thomas Legh Cloughton, D.D.</i>	1 Samuel xvii, 29.....	249
THE REV. FRANCIS PIGOU, M.A.	John vi, 9	257
THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.	Hebrews xi, 7	265
THE REV. EDWARD HUSBAND.	Acts xviii, 3	282
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP OF DERRY, <i>William Alexander, D.D.</i>	Ephesians i chap., 1 v. ; also v chap., 3 v.	289
THE REV. CANON WOODFORD, D.D.	2 Corinthians ix, 15...	299
HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY	Romans viii, 22, 23...	305
<i>Right Hon. Archibald Campbell Tait, D.D. D.C.L.</i>		
THE REV. CANON MILLER, D.D.	Philippians iii, 8	311
THE REV. WILLIAM LAKE ONSLOW, M.A.	Lamentations i, 12 ...	321
THE REV. J. W. GLEADALL, M.A.	Luke xii, 15	331
THE REV. PROFESSOR PLUMPTRE, M.A.	Acts viii, 32, 33	337
THE REV. GORDON CALTHROP, M.A.	Exodus xii, 5, 6	347
THE REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.	Ephesians iv, 15	353
THE REV. ALFRED BOWEN EVANS, D.D.	2 Chronicles xxix, 27	361
THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.	1 Peter i, 3	369
THE REV. THOMAS JAMES ROWSELL, M.A.	John x, 14.....	379
THE VERY REV. DEAN OF WESTMINSTER, <i>Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D.</i>	John xx, 19	385
THE REV. B. THOMPSON.	Isaiah v, 12	395
THE REV. G. H. WILKINSON, M.A.	Zechariah iv, 6.....	401
THE REV. F. W. FARRAR, B.D., F.R.S.	Micah vi, 6-8	409
THE REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.	John x, 11..	417

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 1.]

A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT REV. SAML. WILBERFORCE,

Lord Bishop of Winchester.

PREACHED AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CLAPHAM, SURREY,
ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1871,

In aid of the British Orphan Asylum, Slough.

"And Jesus said, who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me, for I perceive that virtue hath gone out of me."—St. Luke viii. 45, 46.

WE have read St. Matthew's account of this miracle, from the Gospel for this morning's service, and it is for that reason that I have chosen for the text this version by St. Luke, in which the incidents of the narrative are given with greater clearness and completeness. You all remember the narrative. Our blessed Lord was on His way to the house of Jairus, the Ruler, to heal his sick daughter. "Come down, or my child will die," importunes the grief-stricken parent. Our Lord grants his request, and is coming to his house, yet tarries by the way to perform another work of mercy and love, making the Ruler wait for the blessing that was to come, in order that there might be the moral teaching and the purifying of faith through the granting of the prayer. Hence, on his way to the Ruler's house, he stops to relieve this poor sufferer, who had

CHURCH SERMONS.

been for so many years hopelessly sick ; one miracle following and crowding, as it were, upon another, like wave following wave upon the shore, from the ocean of his great mercy. Notice, as you pass, the fulness of his compassion, and the abundance of his sympathy. Here we have our Lord's mercy extended to one person, but his having listened to the prayer of the first suppliant does not prevent his responding to the supplication of another. He hears the poor woman's petition. The multitude gather thick around him ; they throng him ; they press him ; and just let us think what that crowd was made up of. There were, first of all, the Scribes and Pharisees and their agents, who came after him wherever he was ; following his footsteps into all parts of the country, perpetually endeavouring to glean up something upon which they could found a charge against him. No doubt they were there, following and watching him, not for love of himself, not from admiration of his works of mercy ; catching up his every word, not that they might benefit their souls or build up their faith upon it, but in order that they might afterwards have something to bring against him. They surround him, they crowd him, they come nigh to him. What an awful thought it is when we come to reflect upon these men getting thus nigh to Christ, closer than many a trembling believer could get, so close that in the throng they actually touched him, and yet their hearts were so altogether hardened to his teaching, to his love and to his power, that the nearer they stood to him, the more intensely they rejected him. They watched every word he spoke, that they might if possible accuse him ; they gathered up the particulars of every act of his life in order to find, if they could, something to fling at him ; like devils of the Pit, suffered for once to wreath their blackening clouds about the Sun of Light and Love. There were also men of no settled principles or convictions, but who went with the masses as the stream flowed ; men who drifted along like inanimate objects upon the water with no independent course of their own. These men idly listened and looked at him, waiting to see some wonder, to hear some word that for the time would interest them, and they were disappointed if they found nothing to lay hold of. These men, however near they came to him, touched him not. No virtue

CHURCH SERMONS.

went forth from him to their irreceptive hearts. And yet within that circle there was still another; those who were half convinced; men who were saying to one another "What does it all mean? There must be something in all this; had we not better become his disciples?" and who listened not seeming as if they really believed in him. "What!" said they to one another, "are you going to give up the respectable position you have hitherto maintained in society and amongst your friends, for the sake of this new teaching? What will the Pharisees say? Those people you always looked up to, and whose favor you always valued so much, what will they say if you become followers of him?" Now inclining towards him, now cringing back at his approach, they, too, thronged about him and formed part of the crowd. Then, nearer yet, there were the faithful few; those who did believe in him indeed; those who had discovered that there was something in him that they had found in no other man; those who were learning to lay more and more of the secret burdens of their own hearts upon him; who were gathering up and cherishing his every word for their own instruction and guidance in the way of Life. And yet in what melancholy darkness were many of those who were even close round about him! No virtue seemed to go forth from the great volume within him to them. There was no settled purpose to strengthen and perfect their faith, no desire to receive salvation from his lips.

But while this was passing around him, there was one, and one only, who touched the hem of his garment; one driven by a sense of her necessity and infirmity; one drawn to him by the conviction that in him was not only the power to heal, but sympathy to suffer with her in her affliction; that one, pressing through the crowd that stood in her way, overcoming all the natural dictates of fear and shame, heeding none who were before her but him to whom she could communicate the burden of her grief, she said: "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." Nearer than the apostles; closer even than those who were afterwards to be evangelists; with a touch more discriminating and confident than Peter or John had ever laid upon him, this poor, weak, waiting sufferer, with her faith in his power strengthened by her need, with her belief in his love

CHURCH SERMONS.

intensified by the greatness of her necessity, she comes and touches him, and he turns round and speaks to her the comforting words, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole." But before our Lord says that, he asks the question "Who touched me?" and thus brings into notice at once the lack of faith even amongst his own disciples, because Peter, ever readiest at heart to consult his own security and inclination first, said, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" and his merciful Lord, in that answer of forbearance, instead of administering to him an open reproof, said, "Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue hath gone out of me." He knew, of course, who had touched him, and he knew also what was in the hearts of those who were before him, but according to his wont, he determined to draw out the confession, to crown the trembling faith, to give her a clear and open commendation of her confidence in him, and so he spake these words, to teach those around him a lesson they had not yet learned, and to leave a lesson through them to the Church for all time.

And now let me ask you who are gathered here to-day, in what light do you regard all this? Is it to you the history of an event of the past that you devoutly believe? Do you look upon this as something that happened eighteen hundred years ago in a wonderful epoch of humanity when our Lord was upon earth, and when, therefore, marvellous signs and wonders appeared? Is this to you a thing to read and put by, saying to yourselves, "This was a wonderful time?" It was, indeed, a wonderful time when he was doing these things, now eighteen hundred years ago, but are you saying to yourselves, "He is now gone away to heaven and though I feel he is my Saviour, he is gone and does not work these things amongst us now."

Brother, if that is the way you are thinking about it, let me say to you that you have hardly travelled yet into the regions of faith. You have only a historical faith, such as you have of any great hero, great man, or great king—king Alfred for instance. It may be that you historically believe they were great men in their day, and you are thinking in the same way of the Son of Man, as if he, too, were gone away. But you are losing sight of this important truth, that he is not in the least

CHURCH SERMONS.

gone away. He is now beside us, close to us, performing the same deeds, doing the same acts of love with the same hand of compassion that he had and that he did when he was walking in those days in Jewry. Yes, my brethren, to the living faith he is still beside us now.

Just look at it for a moment. Is not this, too, a day when the multitude have gone out after him? Is he not thronged and pressed to-day? Is he not still the central point of a very wonderful gathering? Just take eleven o'clock on this Sunday morning, and think of the numbers of people in this island of ours alone, who have been going to Church. They might have been seen in every town and village in the kingdom, fathers and mothers of well-regulated families, with their children, friends, and relations, young and old, books in hand, going to their respective churches. Just think what a mass, only in this one country of our own! What a multitude, thronging him, pressing him about! It is the very same story. They were there because he was there. We are here (and these others are at their churches) because he is here. That is the true and only reason. A very goodly sight, my brethren, but still when we come to look closer into it, as we might have looked upon the multitude of that day, we seem to see the very same features and characters. A good many of the multitude come to find fault; a good many come to find something to say against the revelation. "A very poor affair it was after all; there was this or that difficulty; nothing that I picked up to clear away my doubts and uncertainties," and so on. Some people come to pick up something to talk about afterwards—"Dull sermon; very poor service; everybody undevout and sleepy; people seem to go away nothing the better, they all seem self-conceited and self-contented, notwithstanding all that is going on." I am afraid there are a good many of these cases. However, I am sure there are a great many worldly-minded people who just float like logs upon a river—like dead things, trusting entirely to the current underneath, for the way they shall go, and the destination they shall arrive at. Very large numbers of people such as these are about, and some there may be in the crowd around me. There are also a great many who really make the determination

that before life fails they will have some regard for the realities of the life hereafter. "I have heard words from such and such a preacher that I never heard from anybody else, and I have determined to give up my present mode of life if it can only be done without losing the good opinion of somebody or other, or, if it can be done without such a terrible amount of self-sacrifice, or, if I could only continue my present worldly schemes and my self-indulgent habits." Let us hope for them, brethren; hope that some word, some look, some effluence of that Divine grace which evermore flows from on high may touch these hearts. Oh! that some such influence, God-sent and powerful, may overcome them.

But there are, too, amongst those who flock round me now, doubtless much better people than these; real believers who hope they will be right at the great day, but who are full of doubts; who have learnt as yet very little more than this, that religion is a general regulating principle which is to produce a certain humanizing and religionizing effect upon the mind. They have not got much beyond that. They have no personal faith, no living faith, there is no reaching forth of the hand to touch the hem of the garment, no anxiety to obtain now, to-day, the grace that is offered to them.

Now these people are marked, I think, by the very same features that Peter and those about him were marked with. They do not like any troublesome religion, either for themselves or in anybody else. If they meet with any people who are really anxious about their souls, and who lead a very devoted life, they do not like it. In the first place, they do not understand any more than Peter and those who were round him did. "What on earth did she want to touch him for?" seems to have been the thought passing in their minds. "We are all around him, and we believe in him." So when a person under some deep conviction of sin cannot rest without getting closer to his Saviour, and (as it were) handling his garment; or when under some great trouble (it may be outwardly, or it may be inwardly in the spirit) a person can no longer take pleasure in his newspaper or his books, or his business, but is all for getting alone with Christ and nearer to him. Those people I have alluded to, instead of seeing something good in that, say "Oh,

CHURCH SERMONS.

this is very troublesome, very. Master, seest thou that the multitude throng and press thee? We are all religious and all brothers, and hope to be saved, but what is the use of this continual pressing on?" But, thank God, there are those who do thus press on; those who know the inward want of him; those who cannot rest unless they touch him; those who will go through shame and reproach; who will put aside difficulties and their own convenience that they may get to him. Thank God, there are those, or it would be a very sad time with us.

So if you look round you, I think you may understand that the Lord is amongst us still, and that he has around him now very much the same sort of people. Do not let it be supposed, however, that the miraculous event recorded in the text was intended for that day only. It was meant to be a lesson to us in all future time, and this very day there comes or ought to come, a voice, a living voice, saying, "What course will you choose this twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity?" This gospel of to-day speaks to us, first of all, to tell us that if we really do mean to get the blessing of our Lord, we must come to him in person; we must come ourselves as separate creatures; we must come near and touch him; share our lives with him; not being content with belonging to a pious congregation or a good family, or to a set of people who believe in great outward demonstrations and in a great show of religion. No; we must get close to him, touch him nothing less. Let your very life touch his life. Your trouble, your secret temptation, your weakness, whatever it is, bring it to him; not near to him; not amongst the crowd; not to any one else; not to Peter or John or anybody of those round about him, but to him himself, and touch him; have that conviction in your own souls that he has that which you want, and that he is anxious to communicate it to you.

And then this touching, see what it implies. A sense that we want something from him; a sense that he has something for us that we feel sure will heal some deep-seated, inward, suffering; that we have a consciousness of selfishness in our prayers; self-conceit of ourselves; love of the world; distrust of our God; coldness of heart; addiction to sensual pleasures of unlawful kinds; love of riches; envy of a neighbour, some-

CHURCH SERMONS.

where or other; these and others are our complaints and disorders, and unless we touch him no other physician ever can heal us. There must be a drawing near to him in our whole lives, for the sake of our bodies, that he may save them in the day of Judgment; for our affections, that he may quicken and purify them; for our inward life, that he may strengthen and heal it; and for our immortal souls, that he may restore them to the purity in which he made them. Wherever there is anything of this sort in operation, observe that there will soon be a breaking through of all difficulties. Do not for a moment suppose you can ever get to God without difficulty. It is a law of reaching him, that it is to be through difficulties and through much tribulation. No one ever reached him without. Blessed are they who are driven on through difficulties by some overwhelming sense of their need. There is but one way through the difficulty, but still the difficulty can be broken through.

How do you say, then? Do you not suppose that our Lord's eye saw the woman who was struggling through the crowd? Do you think he did not see all the difficulties there were in her own soul? "Shall I touch him? Will he heal me?" And did he not hold her up? Could she have ever got to him if he had not supported her? And so if you care to touch him, press through the crowd and go to him. It is no use, however being ever so near to him unless he prepares your heart to receive the virtue from him. There must be that sympathy between you and him beforehand. Even the common things of the earth may teach you that spiritual lesson. Take the case of a man full of intellect, overflowing with brilliant ideas, so much so that he is longing for some conductor through which to pass off the lightning from his mind. And yet if that man be thrown amongst people who are not sympathetic in disposition, he is unhappy. There must be a sympathy between the recipient and the outpourer. So with the affections, a man may be full of affection and love for those around him, but he has the misfortune to be surrounded by cold hearts. That is one of the causes of much family unhappiness; a man is surrounded by such dead and cold hearts that his love cannot flow out towards them.

CHURCH SERMONS.

There must be a power of receiving, as well as of out-pouring. We may see this even in Nature also. The electric current which has been confined by man's art in a non-conducting medium, cannot give off the spark when you put the non-conducting glass to it. But just put the knuckle there and the living spark leaps from the dead metal, and incorporates itself into the willing receiver. So may you also, sooner or later, stand close to the Lord, and mingle with him in Spirit. He is amongst you in his church; in his ordinances; in his sacraments. In your struggles with sin, and in your sorrow, he is beside you (though the virtue does not go forth unless you put your hand out and touch him); and he has given you the blessed spirit of sympathy with himself so that you can receive his spirit. Then I say, my brethren, let us learn that lesson, and let us this day seek to touch him. It may be our last; let us touch him with the touch of desire and touch him with the touch of prayer; with the touch of action, illustrative of our sincerity. Desire may deceive us; our prayers may be unreal; there must be added the touch of action, if we wish for the full blessing. You may so touch him in act this very day. Did not Christ himself show pity upon the widow and the orphan? You are asked to-day to give to the orphans of those who once enjoyed easy circumstances and comforts, but who have passed out of this life leaving little children unprovided for. You are asked to give towards an asylum that now receives 160 children, the means of providing for 50 more. You can do that this day, and so touch Christ with the touch of action. The expenses of the present asylum, with the utmost economy, amount to £6,000 a year and the society can only rely upon about £2,000 of subscriptions and £700 interest; therefore, unless you largely aid them, the present institution cannot be continued. The great object is to give these children an education, founded upon the Word of God, that will enable them, when sent out into the busy world, to take care of themselves. This seems to be an obligation that Christians ought cheerfully to fulfil, and therefore, until any better plan be suggested, I think it is your duty to support the present arrangement. Touch, then, the hem of Christ's garment by the touch of action; press close to Him now, this day, and ask Him to attune your hearts in sympathy with these little suppliants for your generosity.

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. ARTHUR P. STANLEY, D.D.,

Dean of Westminster.

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1871.

"And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."—Matthew xxii. 20, 21.

These words, taken from the Gospel for this Sunday, furnish us with a peculiarly characteristic example of our Saviour's mode of preaching and teaching. Let us first, then, see what was His meaning; and afterwards find some applications of our Lord's words.

He was in the Temple at Jerusalem, and the occasion was one upon which the greatest, the best, and the wisest in the nation, were there gathered together. Representatives of all the various sects were there, both leaders and followers, bound upon their several errands. The people were there, too, filled with the impulses which at that time swayed every Jewish heart. It was the season of the great Festival of the Passover, and two of the great sections of the Jewish Church at that time were the Pharisees and the Herodians. These two sects had contended for years over this one—and to them, all important—question: Was it the duty of the chosen people to submit to the Roman yoke or to resist, and, especially, were they to pay tribute to Cæsar, or were they not? The Pharisees taught that everything depended upon their refusal to pay the tribute; the Herodians taught that everything depended upon their willingness to pay

tribute. Everything was made to depend upon that one medium; and turning the question first on one side and then upon the other, there was no escape, as they supposed, from one or other of the two horns of that dilemma. On one or the other, the victim they had chosen must be transfixed—on one or other they must, as they thought, receive satisfaction. This was the rock upon which they split, and, with that dim and but partial perception of truth which they had obtained, that was the corner stone upon which they stumbled.

But the Great Master of Truth was there. "Master (said they), we know that thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men." And so it was, indeed. The great discoverer of hearts stood there, the great catechizer of humanity and, as upon another occasion in the market-place, He met them with the searching question, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money." From the lofty region in which they had been anticipating accomplished vengeance, from dreams of successful intrigue and confusion, they were brought suddenly down to one solid and indisputable fact. From the manner in which the scene is described, we can almost realize it at once before us. What is called in our version of the Scriptures, a "penny," was a small silver coin, bearing upon one of its surfaces the head of the Roman Emperor, encircled with a wreathed laurel. In this special instance the features it bore were those of the Emperor Tiberius Cæsar—presenting a face the most beautiful, and at the same time the most wicked, even in outward expression, of all the Roman emperors. Round the coin was a superscription in the stately language of imperial Rome, running thus, "Tiberius Cæsar, Divi Augusti filius Augustus Imperator" (Tiberius Cæsar, the august son of the divine Augustus, emperor), Our Lord looked at the coin, He looked at the face and at the superscription as it lay in the outstretched hand of His tempter, and he asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They cannot help replying in the imperial name, "It is Cæsar's." Then saith he unto them, "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The distinction which they had tried to draw between the two apparently conflicting duties, vanished away with those words, drawn from a higher than any earthly source. What was due to Cæsar (so our Saviour in effect said to them) was not to be given

to God, and what was due to God could not be given to Cæsar. By giving to Cæsar the things which justly belonged to Cæsar, whatever they are, the things which are God's are given to God. By rendering to God the things which really belong to God, the things of Cæsar are also given to Cæsar. The snare so skillfully laid, as they thought, both upon the right hand and upon the left, thus broke down. He passed unmoved through the midst of their scholastic distinctions, as He had passed unharmed already through the midst of the raging multitude. Their serried ranks were divided before Him; Pharisees and Herodians were alike defeated. "When they heard these words they marvelled, and left him and went their way."

Now upon this occasion the text furnishes two things for our notice:—

I. A warning to rise above the small, narrow opinions of the party or circle, whatever it be, in which our lot may be cast. We are all of us beset, more or less, by the sophistries and intricacies which time and circumstances have cast up around us, and which follow behind us as we pass through life. We get involved in their meshes, and we walk into the nets that have been prepared for us. We are told that to a great extent we ought not, perhaps, to attempt to go out of our ordinary course. To many of us it is our duty to go on as we have begun, walking round and round in our own small circles, seemingly only a little way advanced, thinking but little of what is around us, or what lies beyond us. Still there is not one of us who does not need, from time to time, reminding that there is something outside and beyond these smaller spheres. How often is it we are told that we must be either in politics or religion (or in many other questions upon which there are divided opinions), either Pharisees or Herodians? That with every one with whom we agree in something we must agree in everything? That we cannot believe anything unless we believe everything? That we cannot doubt anything without doubting everything? That we must accept systems and institutions altogether in their entirety, or not at all?

These are some of the temptations which from opposite sides beset the Christian's course, as they beset the course of our Divine Master himself; but by the aid of the Spirit of Light and Truth, we shall find that there is a true way in which we should walk; not a halting between two opinions. If we have a sincere love

to God, and a sincere desire to conform ourselves to the image of Christ, we may find that there is still a way of resisting these kinds of arguments, which would take us either to the extreme right of the Pharisees or to the extreme left of the Herodians. Let us adopt, in all humility and sincerity, the words of the Pharisees : "Master, we know that thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man ; for thou regardest not the person of men." There is but one way to our Father's house ; there is no rest but in our Father's house ; though there are many halting-places and resting-places before we reach it. Inconsistencies and incongruities will be found in every system. This is one proof of the divinity of this teaching, that our own imperfections are to us a sure pledge that the Truth of Christ can never be lost in the ruins of any particular sect or school. It was before them, and it will live after them.

II. There is the message conveyed by the substance of the text.

Although, as I pointed out just now, our Lord's words were intended to silence, rather than to teach, his two adversaries, yet there is in them a profound and universal truth which it devolves upon all to learn. We sometimes hear this passage quoted in relation to things with which it has really no concern. In former days it used to be quoted to prove the duty of passive obedience to absolute Sovereigns. Sometimes it is used as if it contained the modern distinctions drawn between what are called the Spiritual and the Temporal power ; sometimes as if it preached the independence of the Clergy and their separation from the State, and sometimes as if it were in favour of their alliance. None of these things have any connection with the text. Most of them belong to a state of things altogether of other days, and whatever may be said to the contrary, the question of the fallibility or infallibility of an Italian prince, has no real connection with these words of Our Lord. And yet, notwithstanding all these fanciful references to the text, there is in it a true principle, and that principle is this, that human life is not capable of being divided asunder into two separate halves, one half belonging to God, and the other half to the world, or to anybody else ; but that all religion, all theology, all science, all truth, are really one ; not all different parts of different truths, but all resting on the same foundation, namely, our duty to the One Supreme, Eternal God, which duty is to render to every creature

God has made that which is its due. Let us take two or three examples and show what we mean, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's;" that is, taking the words in the sense most near to the sense in which they were spoken "Render to the imperial power under which our lot is cast, that which is its due." Our Cæsar is the Royal Sovereign of England. The laws, the institutions, the monarchy, the state which we have inherited from our fathers—to them render that which is due from us, of gratitude, of loyalty, and of faithful and respectful obedience. If it was the religious duty of the Jews to render his due even to their conqueror, much more is it our religious duty to render their due, whatever it is, to our native English rulers; our Parliament, our Magistrates, and our Judges. So the apostle, in almost the very words of his Divine Master, assumes that it is a duty to render unto all their due—"tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." All these things were Cæsar's, and to Cæsar they were carefully to be given. The apostle knew that great institutions were not to be overturned, but renewed, and that the things which were God's were to be rendered to God. But this does not dissolve our primary and independent obligations to man. Our Lord does not tell us precisely what our duty is; that He leaves to us, as to the Jews, to discover for ourselves. But He does tell us, that when we have found out that duty, it becomes at once a religious duty. We are not to cease to be loyal citizens because we are Christians, but we are to be good citizens because we are Christians.

Again, we are to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's—to "render" in the true sense of the word, not as though it was done grudgingly and unwillingly, but freely, openly, fearlessly, and religiously. That is the true doctrine of Him who has told us to render unto each, according to his rights. We are to render their dues still more freely to all the various Churches of Christendom, whether those whom we condemn, or those who condemn us. Let us yield to them their dues, not with lukewarmness and indifference, but as a sacred offering of Christian love, and as the express command of Him who tells us to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Faith ought to be kept in this respect, even with heretics, or those who think us heretics. Remember that in this world evil is ever mixed with

good. That which is good, whatever and wherever it may be, has its mixture of evil in a greater or less degree ; and whatever is evil, has generally some good feature in it. Let us, therefore, imitate our Divine Master, and hold up to honour all that is good. Of many men, many institutions, many churches, it may truly be said, " Ubi bene, nemo melius ; ubi male, nemo pejus." Where they do well, no one has done better ; where they have done ill, no one has done worse. Let us not do wrong, therefore, by refusing to acknowledge the good that has been done so well, or the evil of that which has been done so ill. By rendering all these things, not merely to those who stand towards us in the position that Cæsar occupied towards the Jews, but to all whose due they are, we are but doing our duty to the Almighty Being who is the giver of all good gifts, the fountain of goodness and wisdom. We are but giving back his due to God the just, the merciful, and the wise.

"Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." May we not extend these words a little further ? Shall we not render to fact, to truth, to reason, those dues which fact and truth and reason, by an imperious sway more certainly and universally acknowledged than that of Cæsar, require at our hands ? Render to Art, to Nature, to Science, the distinctions they have fairly won ? Render to them the honours with which God has invested them, by putting upon them that image and superscription of himself which none can say is not known ? Render this not grudgingly, or as if from necessity, but with the full consciousness and remembrance that God loveth the cheerful giver. Whenever we lay our finger upon a new fact in Nature, in Language, or in History, let us take it and cherish it and honour it, as a fragment of that great body of Truth upon which we all repose. It may be rubbed and worn like the silver coin of Cæsar's tribute ; it may seem halting between two opinions, but nevertheless, if it be a fact, stand by it, not only in the name of Science and Philosophy, but in the name of God and in the name of Christ. Be assured, also, that in this case the dues are honour, and not dishonour, if the matter we learn is true and teaches the way to honest truth and regards not the presence of men. Let it also be born in mind, that religion does not lose, but gains, by the concessions we have already made to Science. Theology has not only not been destroyed, but has been immensely enlarged and strengthened by every contribution of knowledge.

CHURCH SERMONS.

Such are some of the applications of this profound text. Let us once more, in conclusion, take its general meaning. Render to every man, to every institution, to every fact, its just dues, and by so doing you will be rendering his just dues to Him who is the Father of Love, the God of Truth, and the Lord of Righteousness. What is the actual due in any particular case, is the very thing we have to find out for ourselves, but when found out it becomes part of our universal duty to God. That is one aspect of that true definition of Religion which I will give you in the words of a heavenly-minded preacher and teacher of the 17th century:—"Religion does possess and affect the whole man; in the understanding it is knowledge; in the life it is obedience; in the affections it is delight in God; in our carriage and behaviour it is modesty, clemency, gentleness, quietness, and candour; in our dealings with one another it is uprightness and integrity." When, by God's grace, we are able to do all or any of these things, then let us remember, that whilst rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, we are also rendering unto God the things which are God's.



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 2.]

A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JOHN JACKSON, D.D.,

Lord Bishop of London.

PREACHED AT ST. PANCRAS CHURCH, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1871.

"But ye have not so learned Christ: If so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Ephesians iv. 20-24.

THERE can be no doubt that there was a very marked difference between the mind and character of the first Christian converts, and those of the heathen amongst whom they lived. Of the terrible depravity of the Gentile world at that period, St. Paul has left us a melancholy picture in the opening chapter of his epistle to the Romans, and that the coloring, strong and dreadful as it is, was but too true, is proved by the additional testimony of most of our early historians. The injunctions the apostle finds himself called upon to give, shew that those he was addressing had sunk to almost the very lowest standard of morals. "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder,

lebate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents. Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." And one of the worst signs of the times was, that many of the various sins here enumerated were scarcely thought to be disgraceful to the perpetrators of them, while some of the very worst were actually practised as rites of their religion.

But this state of things could not continue. A great change was required, and the new faith was to be preached abroad. Those who received it were to be new creatures. Old things were to pass away, and all things were to become new. They were to shine as lights of the world, in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation; they were to come out of the world and separate themselves; to touch not the unclean thing. Many of the Gentile believers no doubt thought it strange at first that they were no longer to be permitted to cultivate the society of their old unconverted associates; that they were to abstain from encouraging even the appearance of evil, by their presence. The apostle taught them that they were to be a "peculiar people, zealous of good works." "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that henceforth ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ. If so be that ye have heard him and been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Such, we are told, are to be the consequences of rightly learning Christ, and to be taught Christ is the only true principle of salvation. Must it not therefore be a source of anxious enquiry to every minister of the Gospel when he looks

CHURCH SERMONS.

round upon those he addresses, "Has there been that change in the mind of this people? Are we really different from the heathen? Are we professedly a body of Christians, but yet living without any evidence of our Christianity? Have we put on the new man and taken to the ways of righteousness in reality?" Put these questions to yourselves my dear brethren, and then let us consider,

FIRST, What it is to learn Christ, and

SECONDLY, The effect of having learned him; and of not learning him when we have all the needful opportunities and means of grace around us.

To learn Christ, then, is to learn him to be our Saviour, our sovereign and our strength: it is to learn him as our priest, as our example, as our prophet, as our teacher, as the source of our faith, our power, and our salvation; as prophet, priest and king, one Christ. Moreover we must learn Christ for ourselves, and to do this implies that we must obtain a full consciousness of our sinful nature. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and it is not only hearing and reading about Christ that can bring us to the proper knowledge of him that we require. We must feel, as well as hear and read, that we need to come to him; this was the case with the first converts and it must be so to the last; they were first smitten to the heart by a sense of their own sinfulness, and then they found relief in the soul-comforting knowledge of Christ. But this conviction of sin must be felt in the first place. A person who is not conscious of his sickness, is not likely to ask for the services of a physician, or to take medicine; and so with us all, there must be a sincere conviction of sin and unworthiness. It matters not whether this conviction be brought home to us by the pressure of affliction, by the dread of death, or whether it be gradually arrived at by the teaching of God's word; but we must have it. There must be that "godly sorrow working repentance unto salvation." The invitation of the Gospel must no longer be a disregarded message but must be received as a message of Divine love. We must feel that the words apply to ourselves, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him shall not perish but shall have everlasting

CHURCH SERMONS.

life." "If any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only, but the sins of the whole world. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." We must not only listen to these truths, but we must grasp and embrace them, tremblingly perhaps at first but firmly, and holding fast. In these promises of God in Christ we see the whole foundation for our hopes hereafter—Christ lives, the eternal Son of God, God made man for us—performing by his spotless life, that obedience which we owed to God, but have none of us paid—expiating by his death the transgressions of all our sinful race. He was punished for our offences; he suffered the death of the cross for our justification; and he ascended into heaven and is now sitting at the right hand of God the Father as our Advocate and Mediator, upon whom alone we have to repose our trust, both for Time and Eternity. "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Then again, to learn Christ, is to learn him as our example; for this is the will of God, and when his Son Jesus Christ gave himself for us, it was not simply for our ultimate salvation, but that he might redeem and purify to himself "a peculiar people zealous of good works;" therefore he who was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our priest, was at the same time to be our prophet, to teach us by his life, that holiness "without which no man can see the Lord." Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow, and to learn him therefore is to study his word and commandments; to set him before ourselves as our pattern and guide; to make him our model of most holy life; to offer up the daily prayer that that mind may be in us which was also in Christ; that our devotions may be earnest; that we may resemble him in our zeal for God's glory, in our perfect submission to our Father's will, in his humility, his purity, his patience, his unselfishness, his meekness, his gentleness, his forgiveness, and his unwearying charity. In all these things the true Christian has to strive to mould his own character after that of his Divine Master; ever seeking to strengthen his piety by deepening his repentance and by constantly examining how far he is from what God would have him to be. Forwards only he is to direct his eyes, as he presses on in the race of holiness

CHURCH SERMONS.

forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before.

And my dear brethren, I am not exaggerating; the true Christian must thus learn Christ. As St. Paul says "Such as follow me, be as I am also." Our Lord himself says "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Such is God's purpose, "for, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to conform to the image of his Son." Alas! my brethren, how very few there are who do.

To "learn Christ" is also to learn him as our strength; the source of all our help in life. It is the want of this knowledge that often causes us much affliction. We trust to our own strength, and the consequence is that we fall by our own weakness; we would save ourselves and therefore we get no salvation; we would reform ourselves and therefore we continue in sin. The offices of Christ are all equally necessary, and we must learn him in all of them, if we would know him properly; as our priest to make atonement for us, as our prophet to teach us, as our sovereign and king to strengthen us. The great sacrifice is accepted, and he who delivered us from our offences is raised again for our justification. "All power (he said) is given to me in heaven and on earth;" he has taken possession as it were, of the mediatorial throne, and is exalted to the right hand of God. As our king he is the only advocate, protector, conciliator, and consolidator of his Church; ever watching for its members and its interests; ever identifying himself with its weal and its woe; ever mindful that they who persecute it, persecute him, and that they who do good to it, do good to him, even though it be but a service done to the least of the brethren. Christ dwells in the hearts of his people. He lives in them as the principle of a new life, to renew and satisfy their souls; to give them light, life and warmth; to give them strength to see their need for repentance, to mortify sin, to resist temptation, to overcome the world, to deliver themselves from Satan, to conform to his precepts, and, amidst all the vanities and allurements of life, to fit them for the solemnities of death. Hence, to live with Christ is the only source of all spiritual strength. He is the true head of the Church, and it is he who has promised us light, help, and victory. He is the true vine

CHURCH SERMONS.

and from him we, as the branches, must draw our vitality and fruitfulness. "Abide in me, and I in you," he says, "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." Therefore it is that we find the apostle though not confessing at any time that we are sufficient of ourselves, or can do anything of ourselves, is yet able to boast, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." I know not whether our translators were right when they translated the passage before us "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus," or whether it should not rather have been "taught concerning him," or, more literally, "taught by him, concerning him." From this, however, we learn that to learn Christ thoroughly and properly we must be taught by Christ. To this all other things must give way. The natural man receiveth him not. He reveals himself to us by his spirit, and we must hear and learn by his spirit. Therefore to learn Christ indeed, as our Saviour, our protector, our source of all wisdom and strength, we must learn him in the manner he has dictated to us; but then consider what follows. If we ask for his Divine counsel and listen to his voice now, all spiritual strength and wisdom will flow into our human hearts; we shall be in earnest in receiving the communion; and not only then, but recollecting that when we were baptized we were received into the family of Christ, we shall endeavour at all times to conform to our baptismal obligations, not only by walking humbly and fervently before God, but by using diligently every means in our power; being earnest in prayer; meeting him often in his house, where he has promised to be in the midst of those who meet together to worship him; reading and meditating on his word, and therefore learning him, and being taught by him the truth as it is in him; taking most devoutly and thankfully a part in that sacrament which is the appointed means of cementing our union in Christ; humbly and spiritually eating his flesh and drinking his blood of which he has said, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him."

CHURCH SERMONS.

Now, dear brethren, are we doing this ?

If we deceive ourselves, as we may for a time, it may seem very easy at first to answer this question. But if we look into our own hearts sincerely and conscientiously we must know whether we are constant and devout in our public duties and worship ; whether we read the Scriptures in private ; whether we are serious communicants at the Lord's table. We must know equally well that these are the appointed means for uniting ourselves with Christ on earth, and also if we refuse or neglect those means, what are the consequences. It is, indeed very possible, on the other hand, to rest for a time upon the externals of religion, mistaking the outward and visible signs for the spirit and essentials of Christianity.

Let us therefore ask ourselves briefly, what are the effects of having "learned Christ?" The apostle describes them thus ; "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your minds ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"—a description which he pursues in the remainder of his epistles, and in his exhortations about the sins to be avoided and the duties to be performed, in all relations and conditions of life.

The principle here laid down is, that the knowledge of Christ involves a complete moral change. We cannot be in him and not of him. The old man is carnal and earthly and must be put off, and in its place there must be an entire renewing of the inner man. A new creature is to be put on, revealed to us through Christ by the Holy Spirit. It follows, then, that Christ has not yet been rightly learnt by those who are still living in sin ; whose outward conduct has been changed in no way whatever ; whose hearts are set only upon the delights of this life ; who continue selfish and sensual ; and who though highly afraid of human censure upon their actions, have little or no regard either for the approbation or condemnation of their own consciences. There are those who instead of checking their tempers and governing their passions, think to cover those tempers and passions with the forms of religion. They think to substitute for submission to the will of God, the reading of

religious books, and associating with religious persons; forgetting that it is the inner man that has to be renewed and not merely the outward life; that the heart has to be God's as well as the conduct.

But where the truth has been received as it is in Jesus—where Christ has been learned as the sole source of our strength, and our hope—there will be a deep sense of humility where once there was pride; of conviction of sin, where formerly all was self-righteousness; a broken and a contrite heart in place of confidence and self-sufficiency; sorrow, for having offended an all-merciful God instead of worldly-minded unconcern; a longing to be restored to the favor of our heavenly Father, where once there was nothing but love for self and the world; above all, there will be a love of God for all his perfections, and especially for his infinite love to us in sending his Son Jesus into the world; there will be a fear to disobey him, because of that love for him; there will be zeal for his service, instead of for that of the world; those who now seem to care for nothing but the praise and admiration of man, will no longer be able to live but for the glory of him who died that they might live hereafter; where there is levity and carelessness now, there will be diligent application of the means of grace; the impure mind will have its thoughts cleansed of pollution by the working of the Holy Spirit and the grossness of our nature will be subdued by the power of the Gospel. There will be no more self-indulgence; no more covetousness; avarice shall loosen its grasp upon earthly treasures, and we shall know how to use the good things of this world without abusing them; where there was malice and ill will, there will be kindness and brotherly love; where there was an unforgiving spirit, there will be charity and affection; envy and jealousy will give way to goodness and gentleness; honesty and strict justice will be the rule of our dealings; truth and sincerity will be the characteristics of our lives every selfish custom must give place to the observance of self denial; and they who had never before learned to love anybody but themselves, will be taught to know that they are to love their neighbours as well as themselves.

This then it is, my brethren, to “put off; concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the

deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind ;” this it is to “ put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Dear brethren, have these effects been wrought in us by the knowledge of Christ Jesus ? Do not think that I have overcharged the picture of what we ought to be. I know something of this world, and I know there is what is called unnecessary strictness in religious matters. I know that many who have the reputation of being very respectable and amiable people are satisfied—though professing and perhaps believing themselves to be good Christians—are satisfied with a code of morality and religion that differs but little in its practice, and scarcely at all in its motives, from those of some of the most enlightened of the heathen. But surely this is not enough. What does the gospel say ? Are we not to be renewed in the spirit of our minds ? Are we not to put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ? Can it be wise then my brethren, can it be safe, to remain unchanged, relying only upon the performance of a few outward ceremonials ? Is it not part of the profession of our baptism that when we are baptized we put on Christ ; not in name only, but in character ? Is it not safer then, to put on the character of Christ now ? To-day, the salvation for which he died is held out to us but if we are not dead to sin ; if we are not mortifying all our corrupt and evil affections ; if we are not growing in grace and godliness, are we safe ? Let us not therefore, brethren, be satisfied with anything but what will stand the awful trial it must come to at last ; let us not rest until we cease to be what we are, and are made what we ought to be, anxious for nothing but to learn Christ. Let us try to learn him and to live for him as our Saviour ; let us learn to follow him as our priest ; let us learn to rest upon him as our wisdom and our strength ; and let the effects be seen in putting off the old man and his deceitful lusts ; in being renewed in the spirit of our minds ; in putting on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

And you, my dear brethren, who have done so ; who have been reformed by the graces of his spirit ; who are familiar with the Saviour’s character, recollect that you are but yet learning. Remember you must not let temptations and difficulties interfere

CHURCH SERMONS.

with you. To learn Christ as he should be learned, he must be learned perfectly. It should be your duty therefore by prayer, day by day, to endeavour to know, to love, to trust, and to seek him more and more. You must strive to be conformed to his image, to the image of the invisible God, so that you may put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. You must dedicate yourselves with increased earnestness to God and improve all the means of grace which God has given us, and embrace with delight the promises of the gospel. And brethren, is there not a use in the special services you have taken part in to-day? Is there one amongst this great congregation to-day, from the humblest sinner to the holiest believer, who does feel his faith quickened to put on the new man?

And now may God pour out upon all of you his holy spirit. May it come to you not only as the sound of the loud trumpet proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, but as the still small voice penetrating the silence of the closet, piercing, convincing, with godly sorrow, working repentance, teaching you to acknowledge the great Giver of all good, encouraging you to cry "Abba Father," giving you consolation, and peace in all your afflictions; making itself known to you as the source of your faith, the sunshine of your hopes upon earth, and the pledge of your eternal happiness hereafter.



A Sermon

BY

THE REV. J. W. GLEADALL, M.A.

DELIVERED AT THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL
CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 19, 1871.

“O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me, Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising; Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.”—Psalm cxxxix. 1, 2.

IT is a wonderful faculty by which the bee builds up a structure which is not exceeded in regularity, accuracy, and economy of space and material, by the ablest architect; by which the beaver, having chosen the best possible site in the stream, constructs a dam which outlasts the work of human engineering; by which the faithful dog, in spite of all obstacles, and in the face of unexpected difficulties contrives to perform services, and exhibit affection, for his master. We call *this* faculty instinct, but it seems in many cases to surpass the intelligence of man. But when we pass from the faculty of instinctive action to the faculty of surveying the mind and forming an estimate of its merits, and judging of its relation with the law that governs it, whether physical or moral, we come to something superior, to something more important than instinct; than the mere power of action, instinctive or mechanical. Curious and wonderful as it may appear, this is not the highest power. The super-added power of calmly, and with intelligence, surveying and looking over the actions, and

CHURCH SERMONS.

seeing and passing judgment upon what has been done, is far nobler and marks a much higher order of existence. Man is but a reed, and he is the weakest in all nature; yet he is a reed that thinks. As far as the exhibition of force, of mere power, and the result of that power is concerned, he is altogether nothing and vanity, compared with the earthquake and lightning, but on the other hand, what he does is of far greater importance than instinctive action, however marvellous than material processes, however curious, than material phenomena, however splendid, when considered as the act of an intelligent and thinking being. But the principal function of human intelligence, of which I wish to speak on the present occasion is more nearly connected with the subject of our text, and is that which gives us the faculty of self-inspection: of looking in upon our own minds, and seeing what is going on there. We say of instinct, that it is a wonderful thing; it is unexplainable according to our present knowledge. The lightning, by its inconceivable velocity and invisible power, strikes one with a feeling of awe and astonishment; but the power of self-inspection, the power of looking at our own thoughts, motives and acts, of surveying our own minds, is, if we think of it, quite as wonderful. It is that faculty by which a man knows, not some other thing, but himself. He duplicates, as it were, his own unity, and sets himself to look in upon himself. Other actions of investigation and inspection may be made when we look on an object out of ourselves—distinct and separate from ourselves. When we behold a mountain or tree, the act is easy and simple; for there is something external and in front of us which we look at; but in the act of self-inspection there is no second thing, nothing outside: that which looks and sees is the same as that which is seen and looked at. The eye that sees and examines other things cannot see and examine itself; but the mind which examines and knows other things, can also know and examine itself. Now in this faculty of self-inspection, we have the ground and instrument of self-knowledge. We can know, retain, and re-exhibit, to ourselves the thoughts, feelings and motives

CHURCH SERMONS.

which have at any time sprung up and had place in the mind. We can descend into our own souls and examine our ideas and purposes, our desires and dispositions, and thus know something of ourselves. How far our self-knowledge is defective and incomplete, we pretend not to say : but that it is very defective and incommensurate with its object is quite certain ; for self-love, and self-opinion and dislike to self-examination combine to bewilder and deceive us on this most important point ; so that an adequate and complete knowledge of ourselves is too wonderful for us. It is high ; we cannot attain unto it. And now suppose there is a being, distinct from ourselves, who can look in upon our minds, who can see through and through us, into the lowest depths and darkest recesses of our souls, knows every emotion, and understands what thoughts that have place in the secret corners of our hearts, and who, in the language of our text, "knoweth us altogether, and understandeth our thoughts afar off;" who knows of what man is made, and what man is helping to make himself. Suppose there is such a being ? Well ! but there is such a Being. He that fashioneth the ear shall he not hear ? and he that formeth the eye, shall not he see ? God's perfect knowledge of us, then, is the subject before us, and I would wish to give the subject a practical direction.

Most persons, especially those who have been at all habituated to religious thinking, possess, not this faculty, but some amount of self-knowledge ; they know more or less of themselves ; they know in a greater or lesser degree of quality their thoughts, the character of their feelings, the nature and tendency of their actions ; in other words, they are acquainted, to some extent, with the moral and spiritual aspect both of their inner and outer lives.

Now there are some thoughts which create shame and confusion at the very time of their origin, because it is manifest what they are and what they mean ; there are some emotions of the heart from which a man recoils the moment they appear, because he sees that they are evil and have a

CHURCH SERMONS.

corrupt significance ; there are some decisions of the will, of the iniquity of which he is painfully conscious the moment they are made. We are not now concerned with the precise extent of this knowledge. We only say that a man has some acquaintance with his own personal character and disposition, and that he notes something within himself which sometimes makes him start and blush, and sometimes overwhelms him with a sense of humiliation. But whatever may be the extent of *his* knowledge of himself, he may be perfectly certain that the great Searcher of Hearts, knows him thoroughly. His thoughts, motives, and purposes, whatever may be their moral aspects, are clear and open to the eye of omniscience. He may be a very observant person ; he may arrest every thought as it springs up in his mind, and examine it ; he may analyze every sentiment as it swells in his heart ; he may scrutinize every purpose as it proclaims itself ; he may go down into the lowest depths of his soul, and penetrate the dim and shadowy regions of consciousness : but he cannot go where God is not. God understandeth our thoughts afar off ; the motive which is deep down, the thought and motive from the very germ and elements of their being.

But people, for the most part, are not thus self-inspecting and self-observant. Their self-knowledge is woefully defective. To a great deal that goes on in their own minds they pay little attention ; to a great deal they are wholly unconscious. They practice no serious self-examination at all. Thoughts, feelings, desires, plans, and purposes spring up in the mind which will not bear the light, and which a man would not, on any account, subject to the inspection of a sinful mortal like himself ; yet to the moral character they possess, he is, himself, wholly indifferent, and of the issues to which they lead, altogether careless. But though he may be thus unreflecting, and, in a sense, wilfully ignorant and negligent of what passes in his own mind, and though he may have forgotten many and many a sinful thought and purpose that he nourished in his heart, God knows him perfectly. He remembers them perfectly. He compasses his

CHURCH SERMONS.

path in his lying down and uprising, and he is acquainted with all his ways. Yes, God knoweth us altogether; the Searcher of Hearts knows the thoughts we have brooded over, the feelings we have encouraged, the experiences we have passed through, as well as we do ourselves; and He knows that far larger part of our life which we too often forget to submit to self-examination; all those thoughts, feelings, desires, and motives, innumerable as they are, of which we took no heed at the time they came into existence, and which we supposed, perhaps, we should have heard of again never more. The darkness hideth not from him. Our ignorance does not affect his knowledge. The night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him. This great truth is enhanced in its importance, and obtains a weightier emphasis, and is especially entitled to exert a very serious power upon the mind, when we take into view the character of him who thus searcheth the heart and understandeth the thoughts. Who among us would not be filled with uneasiness if he knew that some human eye were constantly looking in upon his heart? Who would not be filled with trouble and amazement if he knew that a sinful mortal like himself were watching the movements of his soul, and the thoughts, motives and purposes springing up within? But it is not an imperfect fellow-man; it is not even an angel of light that besets him behind and before and is acquainted with all his ways: it is the Immaculate God himself, before whom archangels veil their faces, and seraphim cry, Holy! Holy! in whose sight the heavens are unclean. When we reflect upon and realize the fact that the God who searcheth us and knoweth us altogether is the Holy One of Israel—that he is the same being who has revealed himself as hating sin and not clearing the guilty—who, of the children of men, can sustain the scrutiny of such a Being? What then shall we do that we may stand clear before God? Here, it is brethren, that we are brought closely up to the central doctrine of Christianity: the doctrine of the atonement, the necessity of a Saviour from sin. No man is just before God, nor can he by any innate merit or deserving

CHURCH SERMONS.

of his own, justify himself. He may be just in human estimation, in view of human laws, of human tribunals; but, in the language of the apostle, "Every mouth is stopped; for the whole world is guilty before God." It is by God's mercy alone that we can obtain pardon for our sins; and that mercy has been manifested in such a manner as to assure the guiltiest, of its reality. It is perfect in itself. Christ has gone forth, in the greatness of his strength, and subdued the power of sin, and death, and hell; and there is now, therefore, no condemnation to those who by repentance and faith are found in him.

While, therefore, we pray to our Almighty Father to set a guard upon the watch-towers of our hearts, to warn us of the approach of those subtle and insinuating enemies, evil thoughts and vain imaginations; while we reflect on the number of those thoughts and imaginations which we remember, and the still greater number which we have forgotten; while we consider that all are known and understood by the omniscient God, that from his wise all-surveying eye and penetrating glance nothing can be concealed, so that we are ready to exclaim in agony and amazement, "Whither shall we go from thy Spirit and hide ourselves from thy all-inspecting presence;" yet we are convinced, on the testimony of the same God, that in the Saviour there is a secure refuge and safe retreat; and we are encouraged to use the language of that beautiful hymn, and say

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 3.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

*Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.*

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 3, 1871.

"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"—St. Matthew xxi., 10.

It seems very natural to us, my brethren, to ask, why the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday should be read as the Gospel for Advent Sunday? At first sight it looks very like a displacement of the Gospel history, for on Advent Sunday we are thinking of the two extreme points, if we may so term them, of the relationship which the Lord Jesus bears to us, the one of His coming to take our nature upon Him eighteen centuries and a half ago, and the other when He shall come to judge us hereafter; when lo! we suddenly find ourselves in the very midst of His earthly life, at nothing less than its crisis, when He has just wrought His greatest recorded miracle, and is consciously on His way to die. What, then, we feel inclined to ask, is the connection between this entry into Jerusalem and Christ's advent, whether on the occasion of His taking our nature upon Himself, or His still future advent, in the

clouds of heaven as Judge of the quick and the dead ? Might it not have been better, we may ask, as is the case in some of the Churches of Christendom, to have chosen the Gospel for to-day from some passage in which our Lord describes His second coming, such for instance, as the Gospel for Sunday next ? This, brethren, is what some of *us* may think, but these old Liturgical arrangements were made by people who knew very well what they were about. They have been continued to our day because they have been found by the experience of some thirteen or fourteen centuries, to have a deep lesson for the human soul. They are not often interfered with now without loss, and it may be questioned whether we have in this generation the men to touch up the works of the great masters of the Christian life ; whether we can make the attempt even on the small scale of our new Lectionaries and Revised Prayer Book, without stumbling into some crude mistakes, which another age will criticise, more or less sharply and justly, by the light of a deeper mastery of spiritual truth.

This Gospel is chosen because it brings before us *two* great truths ; not only that of the first coming of our Divine Saviour into the world, but of His coming to the judgment. Passages of Scripture describing either of these momentous events would be obviously appropriate, but to do justice to the solemn time upon which we enter to-day, we require to keep these two truths clearly before the eye of the soul. Therefore it is that we have a portion of Gospel history in which these two truths meet ; the repetition, as it were, of our Lord's first coming to His own, when His own received Him not ; and an anticipation of His coming at the judgment, when every eye shall see Him. For His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was certainly an act of grace. It was giving those who had previously rejected Him a last opportunity of embracing His Gospel, of learning who and what He was and what He had to teach, and what He, and He alone could do for those who would listen to Him to any real purpose. The offering He made for His own countrymen at large, by consenting to be born of a Jewish mother and under the Law, and for the sake of us and all mankind, by taking our nature upon Himself and coming among us as one of ourselves, He repeats on a smaller scale, but, if we may so put it, in an intenser

way, by this entry into Jerusalem. His entry was, indeed, a day of grace to the doomed City, it was the supreme opportunity upon which previous errors and perversities might be redeemed once for all by the free acceptance of His pardon. It was to Jerusalem, what the dawn of the Nativity had been to the world at large, a day of grace upon which God's blessed Son shewed the light of His countenance, and was merciful yet once more to the people of His ancient choice.

But if it was a day of grace, it was also a day of judgment. Now "judgment" means, in the sacred language of the Bible, separation. Separation is the first step in the formation of a judgment. It is so in the things of this world. To judge of the various degrees of merit of two things, is to separate this from that; to criticise any production in art and literature—to say that this or that statue, or painting, or book belongs to the class having this or that degree of excellence, is to separate them. To criticise is to separate. To award prizes in a school, is to separate those who gain from those who lose. To deliver a verdict in a court of Justice, is to separate the guilty from the innocent. To separate is the first step in any process of judgment, and separation was the order of the day when our Lord entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; and, when He seemed at least, about to be put upon His trial, He was in reality fulfilling the office of the Judge, and His seeming judges, were in fact in the dock before His tribunal. They it was, who were of their own free will and motion separating themselves instinctively at His approach into their different classes; taking their sides almost involuntarily; writing themselves down upon the eternal record as His enemies or His worshippers. It was, if ever there was one, a day of judgment; only the Judge was not in His robes, and the parties before Him had for the moment scrambled on to the material seat of judgment, and were apparently those who ought to speak.

The point, however, upon which St. Matthew insists is that when Christ entered Jerusalem, "All the city was moved." Observe that he says "all the city." It would, I submit, be no ordinary cause which produced that effect. It is comparatively easy to interest a single class, a coterie of thinkers, or a political party. Local interests will move those who live in particular districts; mercantile interests, those who are engaged in particular

CHURCH SERMONS.

lines of business ; literary interests, those who are devoted to special departments of study ; political interests, those who are engaged in public life, or who have devoted time and thought to the study of public questions. But what is the sort of interest that can move all ages, all classes, all characters, in a great and varied community ? Certainly we may have seen something of the kind, when a great sorrow, such as the death of a popular prince, or minister, or a great national loss, such as a defeat in war, or a deadly pestilence, or a famine, or some outbreak of revolutionary violence, or some vast conflagration falls upon the capital, or the country. Yet even in these rare cases, the interest is distributed unequally. The loss, or at least the *sense* of loss, falls with a very varying weight of incidence upon different classes of persons. There are always some, who have not much to lose, or who cannot feel much, and who are at least tranquil amid the prevailing agitation.

That which moves the whole community to its very depths is that which touches man as *man*. Not man as the capitalist ; not man as the citizen, or the subject ; not man as belonging to this profession or to that ; not as one of this class or that ; but Man as a being who has a conscience, and a consciousness of his mighty destiny ; who knows that he is here but for a few years at most, and that during those few years he is here upon his trial ; who feels the solemnity of his position press on his very soul ; who has a perpetual presentiment of coming death and of the world which lies beyond it. When Jesus entered Jerusalem "all the city was moved," because Jesus, by His very presence and bearing, spoke to the souls of all ; the power of His presence was felt in different ways, but it was felt universally. The movement which it created was very far from being always a movement in the right direction. Truth is too strong to be without effect of some kind ; but then truth repels where it does not attract ; it exacts either the homage of love, or it will, at least, gain the negative homage of animosity. The remarkable circumstance at Jerusalem, according to St. Matthew, is that there was no class of persons who professed to be altogether indifferent. We know how large a class of persons in different stations of society in this city of London make this melancholy sort of profession. They profess really—they tell you so—

CHURCH SERMONS.

not to care about Religion. They stand outside it with folded arms, occupying themselves with other matters and leaving, as they say, all such things to those who have a taste for Religion, and who choose to follow it out as they please. Whether at bottom they are really indifferent ; whether, in fact, such a thing as *bonâ fide* indifference on the part of any intelligent human being towards religion is possible, may be very fairly questioned. It is, of course, possible enough to be unconcerned about a subject the claims of which have never yet, in their breadth and height, been fairly brought before you ; but when this has been once done, the profession of indifference is generally a veil for a thinly disguised opposition. Jerusalem, at any rate, was small enough in point of population for everybody living in it to know something of the significance of Christ's entry, and we may without difficulty catalogue briefly the elements of which the movement, which that entry created, was made up.

We may take it for granted, first of all, that the main element in the general excitement would be curiosity. Crowds of pilgrims were arriving by their caravans day by day to the great Festival, bringing with them, from Galilee, reports of the miracles which Jesus had performed in the north of Palestine ; of the startling nature of His teaching ; of the vast influence which He had exerted amongst the straightforward people of the northern provinces. " Jesus Christ, the prophet of Galilee," was already a name known more or less to every inhabitant of Syria who took any interest whatever in the questions of the day ; and there were, as was to be expected, wild stories handed about, such as gather round every distinguished name ; stories which are produced by and which stimulate the general excitement. Nor was Jesus unknown in Jerusalem itself. Only in the preceding September, at the Feast of Tabernacles, He had worked a miracle upon the man who was born blind, which had been the subject of special and searching investigation before the Committee of the Great Council, the Sanhedrim. That inquiry had notoriously failed to shake the evidence of the person who had been its subject. After a short journey into Galilee, Christ had again appeared in Jerusalem, at the end of December, during the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, when an attempt had been made upon His life in consequence of His clear assertion of a

claim to be Divine ; and since that date an event had occurred which had roused the feelings of the capital to the highest pitch. At the village of Bethany, not quite three quarters-of-an-hour's walk from the City gate, and only just beyond the brow of the hill known as the Mount of Olives, He had raised from the dead, nay—from the very putrefaction of the tomb—the body of Lazarus, a member of a well-known family in Bethany. This miracle had excited the greatest attention, the greatest hostility, and when, three days before the Passover, on His return to Bethany, Jesus was, as it would seem by way of acknowledgment, entertained by the villagers at the house of Simon the Leper, St. John says that a large number of Jews came out of the City expressly to see Lazarus, who was present at the entertainment, as one who had returned to his family, not from a distant colony, but from that mysterious world, of which, and from which, we can learn so little, while we yearn to know so much. “Much people of the Jews, therefore, knew that He was there, and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.”

Much of the interest which is felt on the subject of Religion in all ages belongs, in one way or other to the interest of *curiosity*. A man of moderate intelligence, if he is alive to the nature and strength of the influences which, whether rightly or wrongly, do as a matter of fact govern numbers of human lives, must feel that Religion is a subject well worth his careful attention. He may himself know, practically at least, very little, or nothing, about its blessedness and its power ; he may be wanting in the moral, the spiritual sympathies which alone enable us to understand what it is, and to know it as at once the purest passion and the highest virtue of which man is capable ; and yet if in ever so slight a degree, he has the eye of a statesman, he must see that Religion is a mighty power swaying the minds, purifying the affections and invigorating the wills of millions of men, and as such at least, it is a most worthy subject for careful enquiry. At this very day, read the newspapers or listen to the ordinary current of conversation, and consider how much of the interest which is displayed on the subject of religion is the interest of curiosity. Why religious people act as they do act ? What in the world can it be that induces them ? How did they ever come to have

such convictions? Who are the persons, and what are the books, and what the states of feeling which influence them now? All this moves the curiosity of the intelligent world. The world stands outside the sacred Temple, but it strains its eyesight very hard indeed in order to see as much of the interior as it possibly can, through the windows or the half-opened doors. If indeed, Religion is dormant; if the Church is weighed down by a spirit of deadly lethargy, public curiosity takes little heed of it, except in the way of an occasional expression of languid and half kindly contempt. But when life and activity return there is a change. In George the Third's time, the public prints of this country scarcely alluded to religion in any way, except as a sort of decoration of the body politic which came out into view on state occasions. We have but to read the newspapers of our own day, whatever be their politics or their principles, to appreciate the vastness of the change. Jesus has come into the city indeed, in the two great religious movements which have taken place in this century; and, for good or for evil, from one motive or another, but very largely indeed from a curious wish to know what it is all about—"all the city is moved."

Now the second element in the excitement referred to at Jerusalem was assuredly, fear.

The ruling sect of the Pharisees, which largely, although by no means entirely, influenced the conduct and opinions of the priesthood, was alarmed at the moral influence of Jesus. The Pharisees felt that between them and Jesus there could be nothing less than a fundamental opposition. They instinctively felt that in the long run He must be stronger than they, therefore they were prepared to persecute Him to the death. They had actually issued a public notice that information might be given as to His residence, with a view of arresting Him, and the Herodians who viewed the successes of Jesus as likely to interfere with their political plans, did in one thing agree altogether with the Pharisees, namely, that there was good reason for their being alarmed. Fear, my brethren, is a form of envy. Fear tends to be very practical indeed. Irrational fear soon becomes cruel if only it has arms in its hands. Persecution is more frequently the resource of the timid than the counsel of the wise and the strong. To persecute is to make a public confession of weakness.

In rare cases persecution may succeed,—but only upon one condition—that condition being that it utterly exterminates its victims. But still you must take an extraordinary interest in a Religion, to persecute it, and the Pharisees, who hated the religious teaching of Jesus, and the Herodians, who thought it would injure their cherished schemes of politics, eyed His entry into Jerusalem with sincere interest ; the interest of sincere anxiety. In all ages this has been the case. Is not much of the interest that is taken in religion at the present day dictated in some respects by fear ? Men who are not religious themselves, but who have seen the vast power of Religion upon the minds of those around them fear religion, just as savages are said to suspect witchcraft in any new apparatus or scientific discovery. Thus it was that the Jews said that our Lord had a devil. Thus it was that St. Paul was accused in Galatia of a want of straightforwardness. When men do not understand the real secret of the power which Religion exerts over sincere and purified hearts, they go about to invent an imaginary one. In truth, they are frightened, and the violence of their language when they have no power, and of their acts when they have, is the measure of their alarm.

The third element in the general excitement alluded to in the text is the imitative habit which influences so many, in all ages and countries. There are always many people who are most anxious to keep pace with the modern enthusiasm, not because it is the best, but because it is the most modern. They keep a stock of sympathy always on hand, ready to be lavished upon any promising eccentricity that may present itself, or that may be sufficiently recognized by persons to whose opinions they attribute weight. They seem always sensitively afraid of being behind the Age ; behind its very latest phase of fashionable opinion. They do not originate these novelties themselves, but they are always at the disposal of those who do. Jerusalem would have contained many such ; indeed, that it must have contained them is plain, if we compare the scene of the great entry into the City, with that other scene at the foot of the Cross. Many a man must have called out “Crucify !” on the Friday, who had cried “Hosanna !” on the previous Sunday, and in each case only because the majority of people whom he saw about

him on those two days respectively did the like. There is no doubt, however, that imitative religion is capable of doing a great deal of work. It is far better than no interest in religion at all. It may always by God's grace lead on to something much deeper and more solid than itself. But do not let us mistake it. That sort of interest is only skin deep ; it has no sort of root in the soul. It belongs altogether to the ephemeral creations of the social atmosphere. It will not stand a strain or a shock ; it dies when the occasion or the influence which provoked it is gone. Like other fashions, it rises, it has its day, it wanes, it expires, and then the men who have gone through it imagine they have made a real trial of Religion ; have discovered its weakness, and as they say, "seen through it" for themselves, and that now they are really in a position to speak upon the subject from their personal experience. But alas ! they have been after all merely swept away by a current that was too strong for them. They have been using religious language, and going through religious acts, and trying hard to fan themselves up into a certain phase of religious fervour, whereas they have all the time in stern reality merely been carried down by a strong social tide of Opinion which has swept them helplessly before it. They have allowed themselves to be drifted away by it from day to day, and from hour to hour, because they did not wish to appear wanting in the supposed proprieties of the position. The wonder would have been that their interest had lasted longer ; still while it did last it was a *bonâ fide* interest. It contributed, perhaps, some real ingredients to this or that movement of the day. What would it be worth on their death-beds—what would it be worth beyond—is another question.

These, then, were the three principal elements of the agitation at Jerusalem on the day of Christ's entry into the city—Curiosity, Fear, and Imitativeness. But curiosity is only aroused when religion has exercised some power, at least over the persons who experience it. Hostility to religion is only possible when it is felt to be a real influence, in at least *some* quarters ; shaping the principles, moulding the habits, and determining the lines of a man's conduct.

Nor do the imitative care to follow any who are not themselves really moved. So it would be, no doubt, on the day of the great

entry into the City. There was an inner circle around our Lord consisting of disciples from Galilee, and some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had witnessed His wondrous deeds and spoken of what they had seen and heard, they had opened their understandings to the force and range of Christ's teaching, and their hearts to the contemplation of the beauty of His human character ; and putting all these things together—the impression made upon them by His faultless life ; by a teaching that carried with it its own internal evidence of superhuman origin ; by a series of miracles which ratified the anticipations alike of the understanding and the heart—they believed Him. Whether their faith was as yet as clear and definite as St. John's, when he wrote his gospel half a century later, or as St. Paul's, when, at an earlier period, he wrote his great epistles, may very well be questioned. It was faith in process of growth, but, though it was not yet a faith strong enough to move social mountains, it was sufficiently developed to excite curiosity, apprehension, and imitation in the masses around. These men, though in point of numbers by far the weakest, were, by their moral force, much the strongest of the various elements which contributed to the movement of that eventful day.

Moral and spiritual strength has no more necessary relation to numbers, than our mental and intellectual power has to the size of our bodies. It belongs to a different order of being, in fact it often seems that mental energy is in an inverse ratio to physical power. This little company then, was the very heart and centre of all the multitude which gathered there on that day ; the one permanent element in it. The curious would soon sate their curiosity when Jesus had declared Himself frankly in the Temple. The hostile would postpone their vengeance in presence of the conviction that, to attempt its gratification, would ensure immediate defeat. The imitative would cease to imitate when imitation became dangerous. And, indeed, during the dark hours of His Passion, a cloud would, no doubt, pass over the faith of the small and devoted band who had united themselves to Jesus. But this would be but temporary. On the morning of the Resurrection, their faith would shine forth more brightly than before. They were the real moving power of that day ; *there* stood, in fact, the secret germ of the future

Church. So it was then, my brethren, and so it has been since.

It is, I know, the fashion to treat this sort of language as a kind of conventional rhapsody, in which clergymen, from whatever motive, are apt to indulge in the pulpit ; but in which, it is not to be supposed that they will command the assent of the laity, for the simple reason that there is nothing to correspond to their ecstasies in the world of fact. And yet, I ask, IS there nothing ? Who has not heard, within the last week of the death of one of the greatest and noblest of contemporary Englishmen, Bishop Coleridge Patteson, who perished lately, by murderous hands, in one of the islands of the Pacific ? Well, indeed, do I remember him—and there are others in this cathedral who share that memory—when, two-and-twenty years ago, he was in the full flush of his youthful manhood, commanding the admiration of his friends by those qualities which, in a young man, win our love most readily : by activity of body, as well as activity of mind ; by geniality and large-heartedness ; by all that is included in that most inclusive of qualities—generosity. Well do I remember how it was believed, even then, that beneath that simple, unaffected, unpretending exterior, there were deeper and nobler schemes of life in contemplation than those which are cherished by ordinary men, although, indeed, he was the very last man to make any unnecessary display of his religious convictions—of those still waters which ever run deepest in great souls. He went on, apparently, for years just like other people, but one day he astonished the world by leaving his home, his college, and his great university prospects, for a mission to the South Sea Islanders. Few men of our generation possess such a gift as his of mastering languages,—and, especially, of mastering the various shades and dialects of cognate languages. It is said that he knew perfectly, no less than thirty of those spoken by the different islanders, to whom he brought the glad tidings of the Gospel. These languages, too, were not fixed by any written literature, consequently they were in a perpetual state of change, numbers of words and expressions being varied with inconceivable caprice and rapidity at very short intervals of time. Bishop Patteson could follow could note these frequent variations. He not merely learned these strange tongues, but he kept pace with

CHURCH SERMONS.

their wayward eccentricities, and he did all this not to gain the applause of men, but for the sake of the higher work beyond it. He might, indeed, have aspired, with so rare a capacity, to almost any philological chair in the universities of Europe; and as it was the greatest living masters of the science of language—such as Professor Max Müller, for instance—were frequently in communication with him, and were not a little indebted to him for some of the fruits of his wonderful industry and researches. But he looked beyond any such renown as could be won at the seats of learning. He had higher aims in view. His fine philological tact was strewn, like the garments of the Disciples of old, in the pathway of the advancing Redeemer. He certainly did not fall away from that high companionship when it became perilous. He preserved his fidelity to his Master at the hall of judgment, and to the foot of the cross. And he has now reached his Jerusalem in true earnest. At the report of the dark deed of blood whereby so early an entrance has been opened for him into the Divine presence, a thrill runs through the hearts of his fellow-churchmen and fellow-countrymen, and even all—excepting our languid, easy, indifferent society—all that are capable of any moral interest at all are, in some sense moved. As of old, so now, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,” and as we bend in tears over his early grave, we are lifted into a higher atmosphere, where the meaning of Life, and the meaning of Death as at most an incident which shall usher in some new phase of life, are read in other characters than those of our ordinary thoughts.

The beginning of a new period of time, dear brethren, is a natural one for asking ourselves solemn questions. On Advent Sunday we are face to face with the two comings of Christ. His first coming is a matter of history. He has been here in person, by His spirit and His representatives, for nearly nineteen centuries. His second coming, so far as the date is concerned, is as much a matter of uncertainty now, as it was in the days of His Apostles. We cannot say, “Lo! here,” or “Lo! there;” “It will be to-day,” or “It will be a thousand years hence.” We only know this—that He whose word shall not pass away, has said that He will come, and though He tarry, it is our business to wait for the appointed time, knowing full well that He will surely come. The question for us, then, is: When He does

come, whether it be in our lifetime, or whether it be at the last Judgment, will He find us among the curious, the hostile, the imitative, or the faithful? What is our personal relation towards His first Advent, and its momentous consequences now? During the few remaining years, or months, or weeks of our lives, do we hope to be interested in Religion only as we are interested in any political or popular question of the day? Are we secretly jealous of it? Is it merely a matter of fashion with us, in which we follow the guidance of others without any personal convictions of our own? Or have we, indeed, found that Jesus Christ is to us what no other is, or ever can be—our only real instructor in the highest Truth; our lawful and most indulgent Master, who has a right to the control of our secret wills, as well as to the homage of our outward actions; our Priest, as well as our Teacher and King, whose death—blessed be His mercy for it—was a sacrifice of unending efficacy and power; whose blood to the end of time, cleanses from all sin? They who know this, live, as it were, between the two Advents, rejoicing in the graces and the blessings of the first,—looking forward, if not without awe, yet certainly without terror, to the approach of the second. They it is who are to accompany Christ in His procession across the Ages, with their festal songs, strewing His path with the best offerings they can make, waving on high, amid a world which is curious, or angry, or imitative in turns, their palms of victory? In one or other of these classes we, too, must be, if we have seen something of Jesus even to-day. And we know that upon His entry into any soul all its faculties are moved. At the approach of this blessed and awful visitation—this advent for good or for evil, for our salvation or our perdition—the understanding, the will, the affections, the imagination, are all aroused. They must, perforce, in the last resort, blaspheme, if they have not the grace to adore. The religion of Curiosity, the religion of Imitation, soon resolve themselves into one of the two permanent attitudes of the soul towards its highest Object—love or aversion. Once more, dear brethren, how is it with us?

God grant that we may each of us answer that question honestly between this and Christmas; having our minds always fixed upon that first wondrous Advent, when the everlasting Son of God condescended, for our sakes, to be laid in the lowly manger of Bethlehem, and the eye of our faith constantly directed to that other and awful Advent, when the once-crucified Son of Man shall come again in His majesty and glory to judge the world.

Lessons from the Life of Christ.

BY

THE REV. E. G. CHARLESWORTH.

Preached at the Parish Church of West Acklam, Middlesborough-on-Tees, on Sunday,
September 3rd, 1871.

I.—HIS EARLY LIFE AND TEMPTATION.

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil."—St. Matthew IV. 1.

THESE words show us a crisis in that great life which has truly been the light of the world. It is like the breaking out of some long-hidden secret. Nearly eighteen years have passed since that glimpse of Christ was given us in the Temple. What were His feelings, what His thoughts, what did He do, during those eighteen years? Have you a vivid impression of your own life from twelve to thirty?

About the age of twelve a child begins to feel the lights and shadows of the years to come falling on his heart. He makes pictures within himself. These pictures have not a distinct shape. Rise and look out upon the landscape, just as the first streaks of dawn are breaking upon it, and you will have an image of a child's heart at twelve years of age. There is the light of the flowing tide in it, but what the tide is to bring with it is only seen by faith. Even the shadows look interesting and beautiful. Faith, or trust, paints something very bright behind those shadows. There is an impulse to move onward into their midst; there is a desire to see what fulfilment these prophecies of the heart will have. Christ was natural, and all this was in His heart at twelve years of age. He was moving on to meet the shadows of future greatness and glory when He exclaimed in the Temple, "Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business?" He perceived a great destiny before him, but only the outline of it. Before this period we have a passing glimpse of a movement onward: we read that He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

If you watch the breaking of dawn, it seems a long process: light comes slowly into the world, and so it is with human hearts. The child of twelve, eager and earnest as he may be, has long to wait before these shadows in his heart dissolve into anything like day. Christ waited eighteen years. After that burst of wondrous, joyous anticipation in the Temple, He went down to Nazareth, into obscurity, for eighteen years. Nothing

CHURCH SERMONS.

is heard of Him for eighteen years who was to be the greatest Being that ever set foot upon the earth ; nothing heard for eighteen years of Him at whose feet every knee shall bow, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Yet, though nothing was heard of Him outside for all these years, a great work was going on in His own heart. The outlines of His future were becoming more and more distinct in Him ; year by year the picture of what He was to be and what He was to do became clearer. He kept all these things in silence, and pondered them in His heart. Who would have understood Him if He had spoken about them ? They ripened in silence ; the time for those great thoughts to take outward shape in words and deeds drew nearer and nearer. There must not be much delay ; He must have one more long, deep, silent, solemn self-search and examination, and, then, He must go forth to work and to die ; and thus we are brought up to the time referred to in the opening words in this chapter : " Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." He felt an irresistible movement in His heart ; something with distinct voice told Him that a crisis in His life and destinies was at hand. He felt an intense glowing in His spirit, and a holy daring and strong bravery to battle with the difficulties of the world. It was a full tide of spirit, in which He realized His human and Divine strength ; but it must first be examined before going into action. Retirement was necessary to this, and so was He led up of the spirit into the wilderness. There He was in a solitude that must have been very painful to some part of His nature ; there He fasted ; there He closely questioned Himself ; there He was tempted of the devil to believe that His mission was a worldly one, that He was destined to be an earthly king, that His extraordinary feelings and inward promptings meant cleverness and ability to establish a throne and a kingdom ; but He saw clearly through the lie, and resisted the temptation. He said, " Get thee behind me, Satan " to all these misunderstandings and delusions, and the end of His resistance was a great and extraordinary joy, angelic and heavenly. When the devil left Him, " angels came and ministered unto Him," and He returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee.

If this is not a beautiful picture of Christ, it is the fault of the painter, and not of the original. But we ought to come away from viewing a picture with more than a sense and idea of beauty. The sense of the beautiful should be, as it were, an angel opening the door to our spirits and our consciences. The sense of the beautiful soon passes away ; in the nature of things, external beauties lose much of their hold on you when the eye is withdrawn from them ; but, as the retiring wave on the

beach leaves the jewel behind it, so ought beauty to leave a lesson more precious than gold—yea, than fine gold. You have seen amongst these moorland valleys and hills, towards sunset, here and there, a field that seems to be, for the time, a special favourite of the sun ; you might fancy that he turned his face expressly upon it to give it his blessing. The corn in the field shines like gold ; yet, in not much more than ten or fifteen minutes, all this extra brightness has gone. It has not however gone, without leaving a blessing behind it ; the wheat in that favoured field has been put forward a stage towards ripeness by these transitory rays. You will easily see an application in this. You, Sunday after Sunday, are in the sunshine of the Gospel of Christ ; if the sermon is only a weak reflection of its radiance, the beautiful Gospel prayers of our Church service, and the chapters of the Bible which are read, are not weak reflectors. Their radiance, like that of the sun on the corn-field, should leave a blessing behind it. Beholding, through these ordinances of religion, the glory of the Lord, we should be more and more changed into His image. When Christ met the disciples after His resurrection, He breathed on them saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” If you leave Divine worship without having received the Holy Ghost, without having received some of the spirit of the Lord, you have missed the mark of the prize of your high calling in Him. Time is passing, and our characters are either becoming more like Christ, or more unlike Him. Our character is the only thing we take with us into eternity. By whom are we to mould our characters ? by whom are we to increase in grace ? by whom are we to beat down the Satan which is within us and without us, under our feet ? by whom are we to lay aside the sin that doth most easily beset us ? Is it not by Him, whose picture we have been contemplating ? is it not by Him who breathed on His disciples, saying, “Receive ye my spirit ?”

You have seen how He resisted temptation, and it says to you : Do you also resist. You have seen how patient and self-controlling He was, and it says to you : Do you also be patient and self-controlling. You have seen how earnest He was from the first to have God’s work done in the world, and it says to you : Do you be earnest in doing God’s work, and having it done in the world. You have seen how He denied himself, and it says to you : Do you also deny yourself. You have seen how He loved His heavenly Father’s will better than the kingdom of the world, and it says to you : Do you also love your Heavenly Father’s will better than the kingdom of the world.

If, brethren, He had not thus come and spoken unto us, we had not had sin ; but, now, we have no cloak for our sin.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 4.]

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. HUGH MOFFATT, M.A.

PREACHED IN TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHAPEL,
KEITH,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 19, 1871.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."—
Psalm xvi. 11.

THIS Psalm embodies an animated and sublime prophecy of our Lord's resurrection and ascension. Indeed, even apart from the obvious meaning of the words, we have the authority of an apostle for applying to the circumstances of the Redeemer, the verses which immediately precede the text, and which close with the declaration: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And since the words which follow,—*"Thou wilt shew me the path of life,"*—are to be regarded as the continued utterance of Jesus; they must be interpreted as a further prediction of the result of the Father's interference;—"the path of life" being the path, which led Christ from the dark abode of death, to the experience of renewed existence in the world; and, shortly afterwards, to his throne of glory and pre-eminence above. At the same time, the language of the text may, by accommodation, be held to be descriptive of the confidence of the believer,—to whom St. Paul, you will recollect, alludes as *"risen with Christ;"*

and who, in view of the remaining season of his pilgrimage, and of the everlasting rest which lies beyond, may justly thus address himself to the God of mercies and of grace: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is the fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Without Divine direction, in truth, the road requiring to be taken, must to all of us have remained unknown. The desire to find it, would by no means have conferred the ability to do so. And, indeed, were it not for the blessed influences of the Spirit, on the hearts of fallen beings like ourselves, there would have been manifested no anxiety to look for it. "The carnal mind," which is "enmity against God," would assuredly in no case concern itself with the things of God. Man, ever since he deserted the way of obedience and holiness in Paradise, has betaken himself hither and thither; and yet none of his unaided, unilluminated wanderings have ever placed him in the way of regaining the forsaken track. This remark will apply to him alike under every measure or variety of capabilities, whether natural or acquired. The heights of human wisdom have been soared; but, as the apostle tells us, "the world by wisdom knew not God:" it knew him not in his majesty; it knew him not in his might; it knew him not in his omniscience, or unity, or purity, or mercy, or love. The researches of science have been conducted to a marvellous extent; but no researches could have "found out the Almighty unto perfection:" nay, apart from intelligence derived from a supernatural source, his most glorious attributes must have been for ever unrecognised. And if men could have no definite,—I say not, of course, no complete,—but no definite knowledge of the Great Ruler of the universe,—how could they form even probable conjectures as to the course which that wondrous Being desires that they should pursue? What sufficient or reliable notions of his will could they ever imbibe, unless in the precise degree in which he himself might condescend to "lighten their darkness?" Had it even been affirmed, in mere general terms, that it was his pleasure that they should "cease to do evil," and that they should "learn to do well,"—how, in the absence of a more express revelation, and of fuller assistance, could they have possessed the means of drawing the required line of distinction? Divine aid herein was indispensable: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life:" if not shewn by thee, vain would be every attempt at its discovery

Men have, in all ages, as will be admitted, stood in need of enlightening as well as supporting influences from on high; albeit there has in a measure, been variety in the forms under which these influences have been bestowed. At periods now remote, we find that, not unfrequently, there were direct communications from the Creator to his creatures. There are no such immediate intimations to ourselves; but then, to a very great extent, through the inspired writings handed down to us, we enjoy the benefit of such intimations to others. When God said, for example, to Cain,—“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” he may be declared to have thus, in the very infancy of the world’s being, announced to all after generations, to the close of time, that “the path of life” would be identical with the path of holiness. When to Abraham he spoke thus: “I am the Almighty God: walk before me; and I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,”—did he not hereby also point out “the path of life,” and testify that he would protect and abundantly recompense each sincere and submissive worshipper? When to Ezekiel he proclaimed: “If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right; walking in my statutes, and keeping my judgments to deal truly, he shall surely live,”—could he have more literally indicated that “the path of life” is the path of practical respect for his Divine precepts? When Christ, too, in later days, enjoined the young ruler forthwith to follow him, and (parting with his earthly possessions) to look forward to “treasure in heaven,”—did he not virtually thus inform us that “the path of life” is a path of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and faithful discipleship? When to the Jews he touchingly complained that “they would not come unto him that they might have life,”—were his words not designed to have an application which was to extend incalculably beyond the limits of his immediate audience; upbraiding, by anticipation, millions upon millions in future times, with their exhibition of similar perverseness; and leaving it, as an obvious inference, to a fallen world that the path to that life which his own nation thus refused to seek, lay in the coming to him, believing in him, obeying him, and looking to him as the Beneficent Dispenser of joys, whose duration should be eternal? So that, after all,—wide as seems to be the distinction between the two modes of procedure,—it cannot, in reality, materially affect my spiritual interests; that to me the way of duty is made

known through the disclosures of the written Word, rather than by means of those direct oral instructions which, in multiplied instances, were furnished in far back years. If the Scriptures, as I read, are "able to make me wise unto salvation," and if the inspired pages lie perpetually within my reach,—what more can I require, or reasonably look for? In what possible emergency need I find myself without a guide? Under the assaults of what spiritual adversaries shall I be at a loss for weapons, the prescribed use of which will gain me a victory? And if I would make sure of the road that leads to heaven, how can I go astray, if I walk in accordance with the directions which are given? Left to my own searchings, I should not, indeed, have been enabled to discover the route conducting to the fair celestial mansions; and "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, yet the end thereof are the ways of death;" but the Almighty himself condescends to be my Teacher: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life;" and my course, as marked out by thee, has only to be pursued, in order to the successful termination of my journey. At every point of that journey, it is true, support will be required; but Divine assurances form the believer's ground of confidence that it will not be withheld. Only let it be seen to, that "the path," when "shewn," shall be entered upon, and perseveringly and prayerfully adhered to. For remember, dear brethren, it is not the mere knowledge of that path, which will guarantee its being faithfully pursued. There are myriads upon myriads to whom light, in rich abundance, is accorded from on high, but who, notwithstanding the dispersion of the shades of darkness, still shun the road which they yet so clearly see; allowing worldliness to retain undisturbed possession of their hearts, and to dissuade them from the enterprise; or indolence to delay their movements. They thus occupy well-nigh as perilous a position as can readily be imagined. It were comparatively little, that a man should be abandoned to heathenism, and thus placed under an absolute necessity of groping his way amid surrounding gloom: his deficiencies, though grievous, might be obviously accounted for: his errors would be excusable in the degree,—and it would be a great one,—in which they would be inevitable. But "the path of life" seen, and "the path of life" not followed,—pointed out by the finger of God, and yet deliberately avoided by the perverseness of man,—this state of things it is, which must beget a far heavier responsibility

than any to which the former could give rise ; the responsibility, not of Tyre and Sidon, but of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The consideration is a most serious one, in how many ways God may be said to be almost perpetually shewing even the nominal Christian, that hallowed road which, if taken, will not fail to conduct him to salvation ;—when, for instance, his eye is arrested by the disclosure, on the inspired page, of his Maker's will regarding him ; when conscience, which is often just the strivings of the Divine Spirit within the breast, warns him solemnly against some scripturally interdicted course which inclination prompts him to take ; when death snatches its prey from among the loved ones of his household, and thus virtually admonishes him to “set his affections on things above ;” and when he listens to the pulpit-instructions, or joins in the several exercises of the sanctuary. And what, dear brethren, is that “path of life” which is thus, in so many ways, exhibited, but the path which, if followed, will eventually, (in accordance with our previous remark,) conduct the pilgrim to the foot of the Almighty's throne in the realms of bliss ? Then not alone with a view to the avoidance of final condemnation, but for the higher purpose of being “made meet,” as the apostle has expressed it, “to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light,” will he prayerfully and assiduously aim at the cultivation of that purity of heart, the possessors of which, as the Saviour has himself expressly declared, “shall see God.” Yes, if it be truly his highest aspiration to be at length admitted as a dweller within the heavenly courts,—then will he, in the Divine strength, seek so to shape his course and his thoughts here, that both,—so far as the draw-back of human infirmity will permit,—shall be rendered consistent with the Spirit and the occupations which shall be his, in his everlasting home. How carefully will he see to it that he be actually “in the path of life ;” that he miss it not by mistake ; or that he lose it not by yielding to the counter-attractions presented by the contrary road ! “Thou wilt shew me the path of life”—these words in our text, may be used to define the source of his confidence and his encouragement ; and with the really earnest enquirer, the being thus directed to the path, will at once be followed by the gladly walking therein, The Holy Ghost, whilst bestowing his illuminating influences. imparts also his invigorating grace ; not alone dispersing the darkness which would have impeded the journey ; but supplying

such a degree of strength as will suffice for its accomplishment. Yet the believer, from time to time, will pray, with the Psalmist, that God may "hold up his goings, that his footsteps slip not;" and will strive that his conduct may be consistent with his supplications. He will systematically avoid every sinful indulgence, as unfitting him, if resorted to, for admission to those realms, within which he humbly but ardently hopes to be hereafter received. He will allow none of the fascinations of the world below to divert his view from the infinitely superior delights of that above. He will love the Lord, as only the man can do who truly feels himself to be the favoured object of undeserved, but most tender mercies. And through the merits of that Lord,—that adorable and precious Saviour,—he will look forward to the being finally the wearer of a resplendent and imperishable crown.

But will not his progress through life, be yet marked by much of gloom? Will not his abstinence from a variety of such practices as the natural man so fondly loves to cultivate,—an abstinence which the law of God strictly enjoins,—will not such self-restraint materially interfere with his enjoyment of earthly happiness? We must not for a moment admit that, in any just or allowable sense, it will. For assuredly that is not happiness,—it deserves not the name,—which derives its sustenance from objects or engagements of which God proclaims his disapproval. To walk in the Lord's ways, and to enjoy his favour, is the habitual and leading endeavour of the renewed man: he knows that nothing which is interdicted by his Maker, can be really for his good; and it must be borne in mind, that Christianity not merely prohibits the pursuit of evil, but that (rooted in the heart,) it represses any ruling tendency towards its perpetration. Will, he then, dear brethren, forfeit one particle of genuine satisfaction, through his efforts to "keep himself unspotted from the world?" Nay, will he not, probably, derive from these efforts an amount of gratification which would not have been equalled by that which he might have obtained from the adoption of a contrary course? There undoubtedly, in God's providence, is a natural connection between holiness and happiness; a connection which, indeed, a multitude of causes may tend often to disturb; but which was exemplified, as you know, at the earliest stage of the existence of our race; and is still, as a general rule, permitted to subsist. When, dear brethren, was

perfect happiness lost? When holiness had been lost. And when will perfect happiness be restored? When holiness becomes perfect also. The absence of all sinful pursuits will create not the slightest sense of painful deprivation; but emphatically and altogether the reverse. "The path of life" is the path which will lead to God's "presence." And mark what our text declares regarding that presence: "In thy presence is the fulness of joy." The term "presence," indeed, is evidently here used in a restricted signification. In one,—and that, too, the most obvious sense of the word,—the presence of the Almighty extends through the entire universe; and is thus, of course, as actual, where his authority is defied or forgotten, as where his name and his will are alike held in the greatest reverence. But while that presence is, under one aspect, unlimited and illimitable,—in another, it peculiarly belongs to those scenes where his praises are perpetually chanted by unearthly voices, and his pleasure, with unerring precision, is performed; there does his eye rest with most delighted gaze; there, where amid the myriads whom he surveys, and whose inmost thoughts he in each case fully penetrates,—he beholds not one in whose breast entire purity does not dwell; not one who would, for a moment, dream of swerving even a hair's-breadth, from the hallowed ways of righteousness and peace. And think you that the members of this great and glorious assembly, deem the fact of that Divine "presence" among them, of which we have been speaking, a subtraction from their bliss? Indeed, here below, amid sweeping storms, and blighted hopes, and bleeding hearts, there are seasons and sources of cheerfulness and gladness; though such seasons may soon terminate, and such sources soon be dried up. But where is "the fulness of joy?" Where does the stream of joy ever flow, and the sun of joy ever shine? Where is joy as unlimited in height and depth as in duration? In God's presence: "In Thy presence is the fulness of joy." And if such felicity be the accompaniment of that presence in heaven,—why should thoughts of that presence be here on earth so frequently distasteful? Far otherwise, dear brethren, will it be with the real believer,—with the devoted Christian. *He* will not look for "the path of life" and the path of "joy," in opposite directions. While "his soul magnifies the Lord, his spirit" also "rejoices in God his Saviour." He associates not his service with weariness or gloom. On the contrary, with the Psalmist,

he can heartily exclaim: "Thy statutes are my delight." The worldling may regard him as an enthusiast; but his attachment to the momentous "things that belong to his peace," has been formed under the guidance of One who cannot err. The Giver of life must best know the preciousness of "the path of life;" the Bestower of joy, what constitutes "the fulness of joy." Oh! if men would but pray that they might be enabled to turn religion to account in their daily walk; to draw solace from it under affliction, direction from it under doubt, hope from it under despondency, and aid from it under difficulty; they would more and more realize its privileges and its value; they would more and more become fitted for those scenes which shall never be desecrated by the entrance of unholiness; and they would exultingly feel that, amid the most absolute purity, would be experienced the highest of enjoyments.

Enjoyments these, moreover, which shall never cease. "At thy right hand," and every-where above, "are pleasures for evermore." To "the fulness of joy," the certified perpetuation of joy must be indispensable. The very apprehension of possibly losing a cherished object, detracts largely from the happiness conferred by its possession. But in heaven, there will be no risk of such withdrawal: whatsoever shall be there, shall be there for evermore. The benignant presence of the Almighty shall be witnessed for evermore: no sin shall veil from any the brightness of his smile. The "Lamb" that was "slain" shall be there for evermore: his sufferings long over, and at no period to be renewed. The felicity of the sanctified, now mingling with the angelic host, shall be for evermore; no tears ever thenceforth starting from any eye. Oh! it is, dear brethren, the safe path,—"the path of life,"—that we would have you ever to take;—for joy, "the fulness of joy,"—for pleasures, the "pleasures" that shall be "for evermore,"—we would have you all to be candidates. But how is this to be effected, and in what direction are we to look? Thou, O God,—"Thou wilt shew us the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy:" "At thy right hand," where sitteth Thy dear Son, and throughout the vast expanse of Thy glorious celestial kingdom, "are pleasures for evermore!"

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS, OR THE PENITENT'S
REQUEST GRANTED.

A S e r m o n

BY

THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.

Vicar of Stradbroke, and Rural Dean of Hoxne, Suffolk.

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. GILES, MATLOCK,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 19, 1871.

In aid of the Restoration Debt.

“ And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss; and he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 39-43.

I KNOW of no other sight, at least to my mind, more beautiful than the sight of the heavenly arch above, studded over with brilliant stars, placed there by one all-wise being, all having a resemblance one to another—yet, though they are alike, are all different, for one star differeth from another star. Just so is it with the texts of Holy Scripture, which is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; some are found of greater beauty than others, but all reflect the truth of God, but of all the bright stars and texts of Holy Writ, perhaps none has shone out with greater beauty and has come home to the hearts and

consciences of men, than the one from which I have selected for my text this evening.

For eighteen hundred years has this text been speaking—speaking, in over two hundred languages. Who can tell the amount of good which these precious words have produced? Let us, my dear brethren, hear them speak to us this night, they speak of Christ, they throw a broad light—

FIRST, on the office and character of Christ;

SECONDLY, they throw a broad light as to the character of those who come to Christ; and,

THIRDLY, they throw a broad light on where the Christian will be after death.

These are the three great lights which shine out conspicuously beautiful in my text. May we to-night, as Jesus throws around us the light, behold him, able and willing to save all who come unto him; may we behold in him our merciful and gracious Saviour. How vastly important it is to be sure, that we have Christ. Here in this passage, we have one who to all appearance was past hope and, was about to die—a convicted and condemned malefactor, one who had had no time till now to shew Christ his ruined condition; one whose feet were now nailed to the cross; one who had never been received into a Christian church; one who had never been baptized; one who had not partaken of the Lord's Supper; one vile, sinful, wretched. Surely if the ordinances of religion were salvation, there would have been no hope for such as he. But Jesus did not reject him, he loved him, and plucked him as a brand from the burning, to make him a jewel in his crown. How mighty was the power of the Lord. He was condemned, pronounced guilty, and was forsaken, yet over the cross of Jesus he could read, "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." Here we may see that none need despair of salvation. How ready the despairing sinner is to say—"It's no use, it's no use, it's too late for me; it is all very well for parsons, for good people, and for old folks, but it's no use for me, I am too bad to be saved; it is too late, he will not save me." Too late! Now Christ is ready to save? Too late, when the blood of Christ is offered? Too late, when the fountain is still open? Too late, when he died for thee? Too late, when he lives for thee? Too late, while there are none cast out who come to him? Oh! my desponding brother, my desponding sister, if there are such in this congregation to-night, arise, shake

CHURCH SERMONS.

off the captive's fetters. Say not it is too late ; say not, I cannot be saved. Rest not till you can say, "I will be saved ; he has saved me." He gives liberty to the captives, he delighteth in mercy. It is only the devil who suggests that you cannot be saved. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Especially would I warn my young hearers against this danger : you say, you are too young to come to Christ ; too young, to become religious ; there will be time enough when grey hairs come, let us enjoy life and its gratifications as long as we can ; it is all very well for the clergy, they are paid for it ; it is their business to be religious. Oh ! you handsome young woman, you young man with robust health, think you is it too soon to come to Christ ? How easy is it to live without Christ, how easy is it to fall back from Christ. Will you turn to him at the last, when you have given your best days, your best health, to the devil ? When you have neglected the house of God ? When you have brought wretchedness upon your souls and disgrace to your homes ? And then when conscience speaks—"Too late ! what ! such as you be saved ? remember what you were, remember what you said and did, remember that you said you would come to Christ when you were old ; you be saved, it is too late ! too late now !" Ah ! my dear hearer, just the tempter ; that it was too soon to come to Christ before, now it is too late to seek salvation, too late to be saved. Resist the tempter, trample him under foot. Christ is faithful to hear, Christ is faithful and strong to deliver ; Christ is faithful and mighty to save ; his saving grace is ready for you. He is able to save, he is willing to save, to the very uttermost, all who come unto God by him, and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. There is no spot on the heart, which his precious blood cannot take out, there is not the foulest stain on the conscience which he cannot cleanse. It is said that there are spots of human blood in the palace of Holyrood, connected with the time of Mary Queen of Scots, which can never be taken out. But though your guilt has eaten, like a canker, into your souls, the precious blood of Christ can remove it ; the blood of Jesus can wash out every and the deepest stain. This, then, is the thing we sigh for ; this is the broad light we seek to throw out upon your souls to-night—the truth, the precious powerful truth, that he is able to save. How many whose lives we have read, and whose ways we have

admired—how many who have made themselves famous by their writings—have been found at the last to cast themselves on the mercy and righteousness and blood of Jesus Christ. How many bishops, writers, and others threw themselves upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus, as their only hope, their only plea. One of our best bishops, when he came to die, exclaimed—“The precious blood of Christ! the precious blood of Christ! the precious blood of Christ!” How striking, too, was the dying language of Bishop Butler, the author of the “Analogy of Religion,” how comforting to him in his latest moments—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” How comforting and supporting is the work, the power, and the willingness of Christ to the soul, when as the storm gathers round it and the dark days come, it can turn to Christ as its rest in the rock, and like Paul, exclaim: “I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.”

The text, in the second place, shews us who they are who come to Christ—they are penitents. It is a very common thing to misunderstand the penitent. People are apt to say, when they see a person penitent for sin—“He will never hold on his way (they never look for it to last); I am as good as he is, why should not I get to heaven as I am.” Let us see the exhibition of evidence in the life. It must be a grace that cannot be severed from the heart to be real; a witness of the Holy Ghost that he is a new creature, that he is born of God. Grace there was in Christ; let us see that grace manifested in his life, a grace which shall give him strength to resist sin, and love holiness, to love Christ, and to hate what he hates; a grace which shall make you happy and safe in life; a grace which shall make you joyful in death. Let us turn for the exhibition of this evidence in the last moments of the dying thief. Hear his words to his companion on the cross: “We suffer justly for our deeds.” Mark how he warned his companion, and acknowledged his guilt, “we suffer justly.” This is the A B C of the whole matter; we shall never be saved, till we know we are lost. It is not that we *might* be saved, but that we *may* be saved; and not only that—but, we *are* saved, and happy is that man who, by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, has found out that he is a sinner, and has found pardon and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah! my brother, it is a great mistake when we thus

misjudge the penitent. We little know the work which is going on in those souls; their feelings are young and tender; they feel they are going backwards when at the same time they are wondering at what they are receiving. The shutters are being taken away, and light is being poured in upon the soul; Christ coming in; the Holy Ghost coming in. Guilt was there, they knew it, but they saw it not; but now they see, and seeing, have found it out, they have found out the great secret: "I am a sinner, and Christ is my Saviour." Does any one here to-night, know, that he is bad, he is wicked, he is vile, and guilty? Thank God for it. Does any one here to-night wish to lie down and say, "I am too guilty to be saved?" Thank God for it. Does any one here say, "I am nothing?" Thank God for it. God's Spirit is working, and, like the dying thief, you will own, "I am guilty, I am punished for my deserts," and while the throng of witnesses around you condemn you, and convict you, yet like him, have faith in Jesus. He turned his head and looked upon him—full of penitential sorrow for sin, and full of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christ cast out, by his own people! A Christ forsaken by his own disciples! A Christ condemned to death upon the cross! A Christ whose title was written over his head. Yet though forsaken—though hung upon that shameful cross, as a malefactor—he had faith to believe that forsaken and malefactor as he was, this dying one could save him from his sins; could open the gate beyond the portals of death, and give him an entrance into paradise; he said, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" and Jesus said unto him, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." If you and I had seen the Lord Jesus walking on the water, feeding thousands of famishing people with three barley loaves, raising Lazarus from the dead who had lain in the grave four days, or conversing with Mary and Martha, we might have believed in him; but believing on a Christ rejected, persecuted, cast out, and condemned to death, where would have been our faith? Yet this dying man could trust his soul unto the care of Jesus. See his peace, see his faith, see the means used; how plain, how simple! a short ejaculatory prayer—only, "Lord remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." Oh! it is not the long form of prayer, not the good English, not the good grammar, but the short broken sentence from the heart—the burden of a broken contrite spirit. This is the kind of prayer

which, winged by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the spirit of God, reaches the throne of heaven and brings down the promised blessing. My dear brethren, are these not the same scenes through which we are travelling now? Eighteen hundred years have passed away since these words were spoken, and the world is much the same as then. Men are impenitent still; the same means must be used now as were used then, to obtain salvation. We must turn to him and speak to him, heart to heart. We cannot be religious by deputy; it must be a personal matter between our own individual selves and Christ. There never was but one way to heaven; there never was but one way to spiritual experience; there never was but one blood of Jesus. All sections of the Christian Church have gone the one way, have trusted in the same power—the precious blood of Jesus. And when we have passed through the gates of the grave, and have reached our Father's house, we shall find that the great multitude, which no man can number, tells the same story: they came there by the precious blood of Jesus. It was the same God, the same Jesus, the same Holy Spirit; the Queen on her throne, with the poorest of her subjects, the learned and unlearned, the black and the white, the young and old, all stand on one level with regard to salvation. All need Christ, and all, if they must get to heaven, get there through the blood of Christ. Prayer loved, and sin hated; Christ loved, and Satan hated; give me this. Thank God if you are able to come to him in time, his service is perfect freedom. Yet there must be the pith of the matter; there must be the hating of sin as he hated it, there must be love to God, love to his people, victory over ourselves, the world, the flesh, and the devil, ere we are enabled to stand complete before the bar of God.

In the third place, the text throws a broad light on where the Christian will be after death—"Thou shalt be with me." How many who have stood beside the dying bed, and have smoothed the dying pillow of some one near and dear to them, who have done all they could to make the pathway easy over the dark waters of death—who, as they have watched the eyes close for ever upon this vale of tears—who, as they have followed them to the silent grave—have not striven to imagine, to know, what was beyond, and to ascertain the state of those who having fallen asleep in Jesus have quitted the family circle? Where shall we get more light on this point than here? They passed

away. There was no pain, no sound, no fear, no uneasiness. Where are they? How pleasant to find the veil lifted up and to hear Jesus speak: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise, a place of peace; paradise, a place of rest, a place where the saints wait for the resurrection of the just; a paradise of joy, a paradise of pleasure, a place where Jesus is! Give me goodly company, there Jesus will be. Thus we are plainly told where the Christian after death will be—they shall "be with me in Paradise;" they shall be with the Lord, they see him as he is, and enjoy his blessed presence. And says Jesus, "to-day;" there is no uncertainty or delay in the offer of salvation, but "to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"—in a moment, on the brink of death, hell-deserving and wretched—yet coming by faith to Christ, feeling your need of forgiveness, and asking the merits of his precious blood, "to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Where can we find, to-morrow thou shalt be saved? It is to-day; now is the day of salvation. Purgatory? what did it do for thee? What can we want more, when there is a fountain opened for sin and for all uncleanness? Purgatory! when the blood of Jesus cleanses? Purgatory! when we can be clothed in the spotless righteousness of Christ? What need we fear; what do we want more, when to-day we can be with Christ in Paradise. My dear friends, while we have been writing those letters, in those few hours which follow after the death of any who were dear to us, while we have been mourning over the past and have thought of their sayings and doings, and have asked ourselves, did we do all we could for them, did we leave undone for them what we ought to have done? Oh! in those sorrowful moments after death, when we are preparing sadly, yet affectionately, to pay our last tributes of respect to those who are gone before, how comforting the thoughts—they are safe, they are at rest, they are in blessed company, they are where tears and partings are past; they are with the Lord in Paradise. How precious, both in life and death, is the gospel of Jesus. It comforts us here while on our pilgrim way, and, at the last, gives peace—peace here, and peace for ever with him in Paradise. Rest here, rest now; rest on the journey, rest through the gospel of Jesus Christ. What can out rival this? A little pleasure? the applause of men? riches? rank, or fame? No, these cannot satisfy; there is nothing that can make us happy here; nothing can satisfy the cravings of an

immortal soul, but the precious blood of Christ. Lastly, for our example, let us learn to draw from this: what the thief on the cross did, we must do. It is not enough for us to come to this house of God, to join in the services of the church, and to say amen; it is not enough for us to have been baptized and to come to the Lord's table. We must have personal dealings with Christ. It is not sufficient for us to say "I hope to be Christ's," but to know that we are his. Rest not then, my dear friend, till you know something experimentally of Christ; not about Christ, but of what it is to be in Christ. Do not rest while you say he is *a* Saviour, but that he is *my* Saviour, he has saved me. Not *the* Redeemer, but *my* Redeemer! Ruined he has restored me; naked he has clothed me; he has put his spirit within me, and I know I am a new creature in him. Rest not, I ask you; you may say you are a thief as he was, you may say you are vile, and are too bad to come to Jesus; but try him, come to him. Trust your soul with all its life-sins upon him; all will be forgiven, not one sin will be left unpardoned. All need a saviour, all need pardon. Rest not, dear friends, till you know and realize what it is which this dying thief found. We shall find Christ just as willing, just the same Saviour; he will take you in. He never changes, he delighteth in mercy. Come to him boldly, and without delay, put your sins boldly before his face; say to him—"Here I am, Lord, with all my sins, think on me; look on me; pardon me." No one ever came to him in vain. No one ever sought pardon in vain. The door of mercy is still open; open now, open to-day. Close it will, ere long; oh! while it is open, come to Jesus, and you shall find mercy and peace.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 5.]

THE SUDDENNESS OF THE ADVENT.

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. A. B. EVANS, D.D.,

The Rector.

PREACHED AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY-LE-
STRAND, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 10, 1871.

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."—
2 Peter ii. 10.

How few of us there are, who entertain a thought of the possibility of dying a sudden death? we do not say who desire to die a sudden death for such a death is no more to be desired than a death preceded by very protracted sickness. And yet we should all regard such a death as not only possible but in our own case likely. And why do we not? Surely for no other reason than that sudden death is not the rule of dying, but the exception. Yet sudden death is quite often enough the exception to forbid anyone of us to conclude that he shall certainly escape the exception and be comprehended within the rule. Thus brethren it is that we reason; or rather, do not so much reason, as think, about the possibilities of death. But the only certainty relative to death is the fact that we shall die. All else is most uncertain, but upon that certainty and the way in which we prepare to meet it depends our state for eternity. Were the time and manner of our deaths known to us, we might

possibly be impressed far more than we are with the certainty that we have to die. As it is, we often make our death-beds long before we are called upon to lie down on them. We picture to ourselves the visitation of sickness that is to bring us to our end; not too prolonged to render us a grief to ourselves and a burden to others; yet, long enough to allow us space to prepare for our change. Visions of our past years rise before us as we believe we shall see them at the time of our departure hence. We think of the days spent under the roof of the old home; we recall the particular chamber with which we were so familiar; we attempt to realize that there, in that room where we have retired to rest so often, we may probably fall into our last sleep; we remember the thousand little tendernesses that associate our childhood's memories with the place; and we imagine in our musings, some faithful hand opening the lattice to cool our pillow with the refreshing summer breeze, or putting aside the curtain to admit the last cheering glimmer of an autumn sunshine. These and many similar reflections pass through our minds as we meditate upon the uncertainty of death and the imagination endeavours to convert them into certainties. But these things are no more certain to happen to us than to any others. Death is not sudden in all cases, we say to ourselves, but only in a few, therefore it is not likely to be sudden in our case. Thus our feelings argue. But that they should argue so is surely not the reason why sudden death is permitted to happen to anyone, but rather we should argue, the reverse. Death is always more or less sudden to those who are not prepared, and there are many deaths that are sudden owing to this want of preparation.

Again it is said, all men do not meet death from what we call some terrible accident but only one now and then out of the whole population; therefore it is probable we shall not so die. In this case, too, the reasoning ought rather to be the reverse; but so we argue out all the possibilities of dying. The only certainty in the question is that we are to die, though how and where is most uncertain. How few there are who say to themselves, "I may die this night; I may even be seized with the pangs of death in this House of God; I may die on the broad sea; or in a foreign land; or at a roadside inn with none but a stranger to close these eyes; or far away from home with no friend near me." How many will say to all these possibilities,

"Most people do not so die, and therefore it is not probable that I shall die so." Nevertheless death is best for us as God has appointed it. Death is not always sudden, but it is always sudden to those who are unprepared for it. Still one feels tempted to ask, "If death were in all cases sudden, would not the generality of men be much better than they are?" But why should they be; seeing that now, though sudden death is not certain in all cases, it is so in many; and why may not the cases in which it is sudden be our own?

We sometimes hear it asked "Can there be anything more certain than death? Strange though it may be however, there is one thing even more certain than that apparently most certain of all certainties, death; it is, the coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world. That is more certain than death because if Christ may come in any age of the world; then, to those in whose age he does come, his coming will be more certain than death. In other words it will be more certain than death to those who may be found alive at his second coming. "We shall not all sleep," says the apostle, but we know that "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," whether we die or not.

There is also another certainty connected with the coming of Christ, to wit, that while death is not necessarily sudden, the advent of Christ will be sudden. This truth of the suddenness of the advent of Christ we do not perhaps take sufficiently to heart; but if it be a truth, that the second advent of Christ will be sudden, then some very important questions will arise out of that truth, which whether welcome or unwelcome, must not be withdrawn from our consideration.

First, then, let us look how far this truth of the suddenness of the coming of Christ is set forth in the Gospel. If a truth is set forth but in one place in the Gospel, it is enough that it is set forth only in that one place; but if a truth be set forth, not in one place only, but in several, this must render it the more impressive and deserving of our regard. It is so in the instance before us. That the day of the Lord is to come suddenly is a truth laid down in the New Testament, not in one place only, (though that would have been enough to make it true, as we have said; and, being true, to make it important,) but in several places. It thus becomes a feature in the future aspect of the coming of the Son of Man, to be carefully borne in mind at all

times when treating of this subject. We do not think that the people of this country have sufficiently borne this in mind. I do not think that I have sufficiently borne this truth in mind. At the return of this holy season those passages referring to the suddenness of Christ's coming, strike us perhaps more than they ordinarily would. This feature of the second advent renders it different from the first. The Lord whom ye have seen pass away, shall come again suddenly into his temple. To a person not prepared for it, death, come when or how it will, is always sudden. So to the people not prepared for the advent of Christ, let it be when or how it will, it is sure to be sudden. Christ came before not because we were prepared to receive him; he came in fact before we were prepared to receive him. St. John the Baptist though he had done what ought to have been enough for us, had failed to prepare us, and Jesus Christ came not because we were prepared to receive him, but because it was God's set time for him to come. So will it be at his second coming; he will come when the appointed time for his re-appearing has arrived, and if his advent be sudden it will be owing to the world's unpreparedness, which has been more or less the fact in every age, and will therefore probably be the case in the age when he shall come. But that his coming will be sudden because of the world's unpreparedness for it (notwithstanding all the efforts and ministrations of the Church to prepare it) is too clear from the word of God to leave any doubt upon the subject. "The day of the Lord shall come and all men shall see the light." The similitude of the thief is used in the text also as shewing the striking suddenness of the second advent.

Nor is this description peculiar to the gospels. St. Paul in the second verse of the fifth chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians, uses similar language. "For ye yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night;" but to shew that that circumstance was not so much in the advent itself as in the unpreparedness of those to whom Christ should come, the apostle adds "Ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake *you* as a thief. Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness." If the whole world had been thus described as not in darkness but in light, this aspect of the suddenness of the advent would be altogether changed. The

whole world being prepared for it, the advent would no longer be sudden. Our blessed Lord again (speaking to St. John in the Revelations,) says "Behold I come as a thief." And again in St. Matthew's gospel "Watch therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come; but know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." It is not "death" that is to come in this way as some ignorantly read it, but the "Son of Man cometh," and "in such an hour as ye think not." Again "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight; or at the cock crowing or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping; and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." Now all this is spoken as of the Son of Man, and not of death. The suddenness is manifestly attributable to the coming of the Lord to the whole world; and if that be so, there are certain inferences arising out of this truth, that we cannot afford to disregard.

We may ask then, first, what is the inference from the suddenness of Christ's coming, as to the probable state of the world at that time? Were Christ to appear in the present age of the world he would come suddenly to most of us. He is not generally expected. Few of us think of his actual appearance though the hope of his coming is extensive enough. If then he is to come suddenly in whatsoever age of the world he may come, it is probable that the state of the world will be very much the same as it is in our own age; neither much better nor much worse. We may also infer from this suddenness which is so frequently and specially predicted, that the world will not be prepared for Christ's advent; for, that the Lord will come suddenly when he does come, does but show that there will be as little preparation then as there is now, and his coming will be sudden to most of us, owing to our own want of preparation. Most sudden deaths are deaths unprepared for, taking the word in its literal sense; though many Christians who use the prayer book, although they do not belong to our communion, have

CHURCH SERMONS.

altered that word "sudden" in the Litany, to "unprepared." But if it is to be so, is it not therefore evident, that there will be no great amelioration in the then state of the world, either apart from the influence of the Gospel, or even by the use of it? Were there such means of amelioration in our hands does it not seem plain that there would not then be that suddenness that we read of, in the second coming of Christ? Indeed instead of looking forward to any such general improvement in the state of the world, it seems far easier to prove from the testimony of the Gospel, that the progress of the world is not to be from good to better, but from bad to worse. I say it would be far easier to prove that from the Gospel, though it be not so complimentary, nor so flattering to the usefulness of human efforts and instrumentality. Christ gave no special notice of the time of his first coming, nor will he of the second, when, (as in the first,) he will come to do a work that none other can do in his stead. Let him delay his coming as long as he may, it is clear he will find the world unprepared for him. The theory that there is to be some gradual but general amelioration in the world's condition by the instrumentality of man, by the progress of civilization, by social science, or by any mortal means, is directly contradicted by these testimonies. Were it not so there would be much less suddenness in the coming of our Lord. If those who support that theory, mean us to understand that there is to be a change by gradual steps, in the whole base and fabric of society, we ask, where is their authority for any such anticipation? We hear many people talk about much better times that are to come at some future period in the history of the world. These people profess to look forward to a time when the gospel is to go forth with increased power, adapted to the increased necessity for preparing the world for the terrible day of the Lord. But they do not tell us where, and how far, this increased power is promised in God's word. Neither do they consider that now, in our day, there is no lack of power in the Gospel any more than there will be then; and that the great obstacle in its way is our own want of faith. It seems to them however that there is to be some future age of increased gospel power, which is also to be an age of mercy, and that God will not withhold the necessary power that may be wanted. The usual phraseology in which is set forth the necessity, and the means of supplying it, is that there is to be a "larger outpouring of the

Holy Spirit." There are many who go even so far as to say that before the second advent of Christ, this increased and remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit will actually take place. What Scripture authority however there is for this expectation we are not told; whilst at the same time it is worthy of remark that those Christians pay the very least respect to the dictates of God's word and offer the utmost defiance to the rules and practice of God's Church. Does it never occur to them that to maintain that a larger outpouring of God's Holy Spirit is to come by and by, is in effect to say that God has not sufficiently poured out his Holy Spirit already? That in some way or other on God's part there has been an omission, which at some future time he will supply? That there has been parsimoniousness on the part of the great Giver of every perfect good, which at some other time will be remedied?

Moreover if this great outpouring of the Spirit is to take place, in what manner can the second advent be described as sudden? If we are to have to wait for this great outpouring of the Spirit, will it not hinder, rather than promote, preparation for the second coming of Christ? If of two events, one is to be expected before the other, we are likely to be less prepared for the latter of the two than the former. If again this outpouring of the Spirit is to prepare the way for the advent of Christ, will it not in the same degree to the unprepared for that advent, supersede the necessity for preparation? It is a question often discussed and respecting which theologians have often been ranged on two sides, whether the advent of Christ is to be at the close, or at the beginning of that thousand years of blessedness on earth prophesied by St. John. The phrase really means "an age" but surely the gospel predictions of the suddenness of Christ's coming, ought to go very far towards settling the question. That can hardly be called a sudden event which is to be preceded by a lengthened period of this special and definite character. If the advent is to be preceded by this period, it is manifest that although we do not know when the advent is to come to pass, we at least know the time when it is not to come. The day of the Lord is to come as a thief in the night; but if it is to be preceded by this long period of marked change and improvement, how can it be said to come as a thief in the night? Is it not clear that at a certain given time we may say (upon this theory) that the advent will assuredly not come for a

thousand years? And if Christ may not come till the close of that age, what guarantee is there of his coming at all? Would not the chief purposes of his coming have been accomplished before his arrival? Would not that age be an age of preparation for the advent, such as to destroy altogether the idea of its suddenness? It would seem that after such a period as that, the coming of Christ would simply be to sit in judgment upon the character and destiny of some other world; but for that object, alone, it would not be at all necessary that Christ should return into this world.

The next question which naturally follows is, Where is the judgment to be? In heaven, or on earth, or in some place midway between them? But let it be where it may, if it be not upon the earth, Christ need not come back to the earth; but if the judgment is to be upon the earth, then we believe that Christ will come back to the earth to judgment.

This truth then of the suddenness of the day of the Lord, my brethren, is a very practical one. Death is not necessarily sudden, but the coming of the Son of Man is. Death is sudden always to those who are not prepared for it. And yet how few of us can endure to think upon the possibility of a sudden death? How many are there who are not prepared for death at all? Remember that they only are prepared to die who are prepared for a sudden death; and they only are prepared for the coming of the Son of Man who are prepared for his coming suddenly. Preparation for the one involves preparation for the other. As we are prepared for death so are we prepared for Christ's coming on earth. If he come before we are prepared for him we are eternally undone; but to be prepared to die, is for us to live with him, and for him to live with us, for ever. Living or dying we are his, if as Christians we live and die.

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. W. C. HEATON, B.A.,

Curate of St. Clement Danes.

PREACHED AT ST. CLEMENT DANES CHURCH, STRAND,
LONDON

ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 10, 1871.

"Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."—Hebrews xiii. 5

Some doubt has existed in the minds of learned men as to whether St. Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews or not. The passage before us however, taken with the context, is very characteristic of St. Paul, and affords considerable internal evidence that he really was the author of this Epistle. It was customary with St. Paul after discussing points of doctrine to lay down certain rules of life; and we may gather from his writings a great many very valuable precepts to guide us in our daily life; precepts far surpassing any of those found in the works of the ancient philosophers of his time. As we read St. Paul's Epistle, we discover these precepts from time to time interspersed throughout his writings, surprising at the time we first find them, and all the more calculated to impress because unexpected. They come evidently from a mind filled with wisdom and goodness, like good seed scattered for the harvest of the future. We observe the same characteristic feature in the Epistle to the Romans, about the author of which there is no doubt whatever. In that Epistle after the

end of the 11th Chapter, St. Paul leaves off speaking of spiritual doctrines and passes on to a series of precepts for moral practice. The latter part of each of these Epistles, both to the Romans and to the Hebrews, is very much the same, resembling in fact two gardens cultivated by the same hand. Another feature to be traced in each of these Epistles is the manner in which some of these precepts are joined on to previous admonitions. For instance in the Epistle to the Romans we find "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord." The admonition is given first, and the reason for it follows immediately afterwards. So in the passage before us, St. Paul says "Be content with such things as ye have, *for*, He" (that is, God) "hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." There are a good many people in the world, we know, who often recommend to others various virtues which they do not practice themselves. It is very easy for any man to say to his neighbour "Be content with such things as ye have" but it is a very difficult and hard thing to practice. We can all be happy and contented in the time of prosperity; when we are in health, and when the powers of the mind and of the body are vigorous and strong; but in the time of adversity and of sickness, and perhaps of want; when the persons and things we used to hold dear are lost to us, this is difficult to practice; and however easy it may be to advise, the advice which simply, tells you to be content and yet points to nothing in the shape of foundation for that advice, is, as a precept, of very little value; yea, is rather a mockery than otherwise. It resembles the advice of the philosophers of old, who recommended the practice of patience under sufferings, just because patience is a virtue. But we want some nobler motive to make us happy, or rather contented, in every condition in life. Afflictions cannot be supported by such a hard and dry rule as this alone. There is one Book and one Book only, which will really teach us how to acquire this virtue, and that is God's own word—the Bible. And yet it is surprising that although all men are born into the world subject to troubles and sorrows of every kind, how comparatively few resort to this book to learn how to bear them. Examples are given to us in that book of people of God who have

been enabled to endure very great afflictions and yet have not wished that their lot had been different. In the text before us we have St. Paul exhorting the people of Christendom to be content with such things as they have, but he does not stop there. He goes on to give us a reason why we should be content with what we have, for He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The reason thus appended to the precept is so simple that a child may understand it. It is quite unnecessary to enter upon any lengthened argument to shew the value of a contented and happy mind, but contentment is a precious thing, and like everything precious it is very rarely to be met with. An old divine indeed once wrote a book which he entitled "The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment," in which he set forth that Christian contentment was so remarkable a circumstance that he could not but feel justified in adopting that title for his work. In some measure we see discontent every where. Thus we learn that even among the Angels in Heaven a spirit of discontent arose, the strife ending in their expulsion from the realms of Glory and being consigned to the regions of darkness and misery for ever. Again in that beautiful garden of Eden where the choicest of everything grew, and Adam and Eve were placed forbidden to touch the fruit but of the one single tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; yet with everything else on earth at their command, the spirit of discontent shewed itself and proved their ruin. Ahab had his kingdom, his throne and his vast possessions, and yet, while Naboth remained the owner of that one little vineyard, he was miserable and could not be contented until he had done a deed which brought upon his head a speedy and terrible retribution. Wherever we look around us at the present day we see the same spirit of discontent abroad. This arises probably, in part, from our present imperfect state; but in a very large number of instances if not in the great majority of cases, the existence of a spirit of discontent arises from our not making the most of our present advantages and benefits. Every person almost that we meet wants something more, and seems to be forgetful of the vast number of favours and mercies already received at God's hands. Every person here I dare say wishes or has wished for something different from what he has now, and is hoping and looking

forward for that something sooner or later to be obtained. It is our custom too often to disregard altogether the stern realities of the present and to fix our expectations upon something in the future which we believe is to make us better and happier than we are now. It may seem very foolish at first sight to say to the poor and needy, surrounded on all sides by wealth and luxury, "Be content with such things as ye have"; but alas! we more frequently see this virtue of patience put in practice by the poor, then by the rich, whose very greatness makes them discontented. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" says the Scripture, but it is very painful to reflect that in order to illustrate this truth we must go most frequently amongst our poorer brethren for our examples. In the ranks of poverty we may often find contentment housed in the poorest home, living upon the most frugal fare, and maintaining a hard and constant struggle for existence. When we ask these poor people the reason of their contented state of mind what do we learn? That it is because they are depending upon One who has promised that He will never leave them nor forsake them. This is the cause of their contentment; this is the reason of their happiness, for to be content is to be happy; to be content is to be rich; to be content is to be opulent; for the man who has no wants, is; after all, the rich man, though what he has may be not much. We do not reckon a man rich by looking solely at his income but at his outgoings and requirements also. A prince may be a poor man in a palace while a peasant may be a rich man in a cottage. The contented man does not depend upon a broken reed to make him happy but is happy in himself, having all the requirements necessary to fill him with joy and peace. A man of this disposition goes about his daily occupations cheerfully and the ups and downs of life have but little effect upon him. From the thorn he plucks grapes; from the thistle he gathers figs; and like Paul and Silas when in the stocks he can "in all things praise God." It is not uncommon, indeed, to find this spirit of contentment in the midst even of the greatest pain; but brethren the one grand point, the great secret, of all happiness is to have a contented mind. A contented mind and a good conscience will make a man happy in all conditions. He knows not how to fear, who dares to die. "I have learned,"

says the Apostle, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." That man is the great man who enjoys his earthenware as though it were plate and he is equally the great man, who regards his plate as though it were earthenware. Contentment enriches clay with the qualities of silver and gold; contentment converts the darkness of smoke into the brilliancy, of flame; and a single ray of it is sufficient to dissipate the clouds of melancholy, and assuage the anguish of pain, in the person upon whom its benignant influence descends. Its presence in a word, changes every place into a kind of heaven.

"But then how are we to have this contentment?" say some. "We have wants and they must be met and supplied." My brethren, if we look to the other side of the question and reflect how little we have deserved, then, what we have received will, by comparison, seem very great indeed. A proud and avaricious spirit will sometimes rise within us and make us wish for more, because others have more than we have, but if we were to have all that we think we want, we should perhaps very often have what would simply be the ruin of us. Lot, by his reluctance to leave Sodom, lost everything he possessed in the destruction of the cities of the plain; and perhaps had we been allowed to drink a draught from the cup we have often wished for, we should have taken that which would have proved our poison in the end.

The Apostle gives us in the text a most excellent reason for contentment, though it is contained in a very few words. He does not tell us simply that it is a virtue to be satisfied with our condition; or merely warn us that we shall be very uncomfortable if we are not. The Apostle tells us that God has made a promise; and he founds upon that promise the reason why we should be content. The Master has spoken, and by him our riches will be increased if we only wait. They are but a few words, spoken originally by God to Joshua; but by the same words he now pledges himself to every Christian, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

In studying how to apply the words and precepts of the Bible to ourselves we must first learn that in order that they may be our stay and support in every position of life into which we may be called, they must be firmly fixed in our minds. This

is absolutely necessary before they can be useful. When asked for the reasons for the hope that is in us, we can only give them from our knowledge of the Scriptures. Let us then endeavour to know more of them and to make them the guide of our lives. They will lead us to do many things in a very different manner from that in which we otherwise should have done them; they are the counsels of an infinitely good and wise Father which will often keep us from putting ourselves in dangerous positions. If any ask us the reason why we do certain things in a certain way, we simply reply "Thus it is written; there is the Command"; and though we ourselves do not always see the reason of the command (more seldom perhaps than others who are watching us) still we obey because we know it is the Master's order. What His divine commands are we can only know by reading His holy word; by storing its precepts up in our hearts; by having the texts of Scripture so fixed in our minds as to be able to bring them to our memories at the very moment we need them. The day is rapidly coming, is perhaps near at hand, when we shall all need them. It may be that we shall have to go through long days of sorrow, and long nights of pain and affliction; but should it in the providence of God be otherwise, there still remains death itself, that dark valley through the shadow of which we must all pass. There the sympathy of those nearest and dearest to us can no longer help us or furnish a single ray of light. One thing only can; and that is the promise of God contained in His holy word, that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

The promises of God however must be stored up in our minds to be of use to us then. It is true they may in some cases be read to us by others but on the other hand the opportunity may be denied us, and then if we have them not stored up in our memories we shall be wretched indeed. Now, then, my brethren; now, when we have our minds in their full vigour, is the time for us to study the Bible so that we may have its real and only consolation in the trying hour. To no other source can we then look for hope or for solace and yet how much is this precious book neglected! The man who is acquainted with his Bible is like one who has built his house upon a sure foundation and the particular foundation for our hope offered by the Apostle in the

text is that contained in the promise of God himself "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." That promise is now offered to each one of us and the word translated "never" is, in the original, a very strong expression, signifying "Never; no, never." Surely such a promise as this is a good reason for contentment. In this world it is all leaving, changing, forsaking and losing. We lose our health, we get deserted by our friends, but God our Almighty Father, says to us "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Those we love may all die and leave us alone in the world; everything we have may be taken away from us; but the promise of God remains ever sure "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

But do not let us misunderstand the meaning of this passage. God does not here tell us that our lives on earth are to be pleasant and our paths strewn with flowers. He simply says "I will not leave thee" but he says nothing about the particular circumstances in which his people may be placed. Christians, as we all know from other parts of the sacred writings, are to be proved and purified by trials and sufferings, by sickness and by reverses of fortune; and it is at such times that we find the full force and value of promises such as this; because God has distinctly said that whether we be in affliction or in the valley of the shadow of death, or before the great Throne of Judgment itself, He will not leave us, but will be present to support, to comfort, and to strengthen us.

Two great hindrances to contentment in this life are our pride, and our ignorance of the need of true religion.

We do not realize the necessity for the influence of grace and holiness upon our lives, and this is because, as I said before we do not consider, out of all that we have received, how little we have deserved. We have so little of the meek and humble spirit of the Gospel that we fail to see and acknowledge the goodness of God in having given us what we have; and are always seeking and asking for more. If we want to be contented therefore, let us seek to know ourselves; let us endeavour to be like Jesus, let us make him our all in all. We can only learn true contentment at the feet of Jesus, but if we learn it there we shall have our happiness in heaven, and while we are waiting here a very little will satisfy us.

CHURCH SERMONS.

And this leads me to remark that there is one thing with which we should never be content; and that is, the amount of our spiritual attainments. Let us always bear in mind, that we continually require more faith, more prayer and more grace; and that we must constantly ask to have an increase of them. Never let us be content till we find our rest in Christ. Everything that comes between Christ and us must be cast aside. We read in history that when the Emperor Alexander visited the philosopher Diogenes, he ask him if there was anything he wanted, to which the philosopher answered that he wanted nothing but that the Emperor should stand from between him and the sun. Let us adopt his words with regard to everything that stands between us and the Sun of Righteousness and then when we wake up at the great resurrection, we shall see Him in His Glory as He is, and be satisfied.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 6.]

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. H. R. HAWEIS, M.A.

PREACHED AT ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, MARY-
LEBONE, LONDON.

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1871.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF SACRIFICE.*

On Sunday last I endeavoured to clear the way, both for you and myself, to the proper understanding of what I called the "Doctrine of pleasure." I tried to shew you that God did not intend us to be the less happy because we were Christians; but that on the contrary he intended us to enjoy pleasure in mind, pleasure in body, and pleasure in spirit. I also tried to lay down what appeared to me to be the limits within which such pleasure was lawful. I shewed you how impossible it was to solve the mystery of our own nature by attempting to crush out of it its own wholesome instincts; we saw how asceticism had been tried and had failed; that asceticism might be a good exception to a bad law, but when sought to be set up as a law itself, it was a bad law. We shewed that there were but two justifications for the ascetic's view of life and its duties; the one founded upon the corrupt state of a community in general; and the other upon the corrupt state of the individual. If society be so eaten up, so riddled through and through, with vice and uncleanness, that all its recreations and amusements

* The Rev. H. R. Haweis does not preach from texts.

CHURCH SERMONS.

are inevitably tainted with the foul elements of contagion, then we may perhaps be justified in withdrawing ourselves for a season from the pernicious influences of such a wicked world. But modern society, bad though it may be in some respects, is not reduced to such a state as that; and still more confidently can it be said that it has not been reduced to such a state by Christianity. No man can conscientiously deny that; and although all the amusements and recreations of mankind probably contain some radical element which may be developed into mischief by the wickedly inclined, still it does not therefore become an act either of reason or duty to shut ourselves up and turn our backs upon all the lights and shadows of human existence. The other justification we alluded to was the corruptness of the individual. There are many men about in the world who now enjoy the reputation of being very good men, but who in the early part of their career have led most abandoned lives. They have subsequently however been what is called "converted;" and so hot is the zeal arising out of their new conversion that they look with horror upon every act of their past lives, and go about crying indiscriminately in the market-place, without distinction between things wholesome and things unwholesome, "Unclean, unclean!" You will treat the ministrations of individuals such as these with all due reverence, but at the same time making all due allowance for the circumstances under which they address themselves to your notice. There are however some, and it is within the bounds of possibility that there may be some even in this congregation, who cannot resist temptation. It would be the same case as that of the drunkard; the man who cannot refrain from drinking what is *not* good for him, or from drinking too much of what *is* good for him. In his case it is of course best that he should be kept away from all fermented liquors and from everything else that he cannot use without abusing it. But that man's failing is no ground for laying down an ascetic law for all society.

I know that the obvious answer to some part of what I said last Sunday is, that it is utterly unnecessary to tell people they may go and enjoy themselves, because they are all prone enough to do so without being told. To this however, I take leave to remark, that it is precisely because human nature is prone to seek its own enjoyment without being told, that it is important to prove what are the right grounds for so doing and to set forth

the proper limits within which that tendency of our nature may be indulged. It is just for the reason that you are always more ready to lay hold of that which promises pleasure, than to lay hold of that which leads to pain, that you should clearly settle in your own minds what kind of pleasure is lawful and what is not. It is quite as mischievous for a man to do wrong things believing them to be right and innocent, as it is to do right things believing them to be wrong and pernicious. We do not want any man's conscience to be defiled with the burden of things that he is not able to bear. I may mention here that after last Sunday's sermon I was asked, whether there really existed in society a race of lunatics who thought that going to a dance, or to a theatre, or indulging in any other legitimate recreation of ordinary life was wrong? I said "My friend if you do not know that there are people in the world who believe all these things to be wrong, you must live within a very narrow circle." In fact these liberal enthusiasts are just as earnest in their condemnations as the most dogmatic Christians could be in the denunciation of sin.

I give you credit for having grasped what I endeavoured to lay down as the Law of Human Pleasure; and I now proceed to another topic, which I have entitled "The Doctrine of Sacrifice;" or in other words, the law of sacrifice. It is sacrifice which balances pleasure in connection with your work, and with all the duties you owe your fellow-man. The great doctrine of sacrifice, it is that arrests a man when he is rushing on in his career of gratification, and says to him firmly "Thus far shalt thou go," but by a higher law than that of pleasure, "no farther." The great law of sacrifice runs through the whole of creation; it is the law upon which the world itself reposes; it is the law without which no human society could hold together; it is the law, I had almost said, without which no animal life, or animal functions, could go on for more than but a very limited period of time.

The law of living by the sacrifices and sufferings of others is a hard, bitter, and unkind law, when looked upon from one side of the question. It seems also a most monstrous law; one that baffles the mind to understand in all its relations. It baffles my mind to understand it, and yet it is a fact which comes home to me when I search into the sources of my own organization and of the organization of the whole world. This law runs through

CHURCH SERMONS.

all creation and upon that law God has constituted the order of affairs throughout the globe we inhabit. I take a little drop of water, for instance, and put it under the magnifying glass, what do I see? Myriads of insects, previously invisible to my naked eye, living by the sacrifice of one to another; constantly devouring one another, the survivor living by the sacrifice of that other, and having apparently no other mode of obtaining sustenance.

I go a little further up in the scale of the animal creation and I find the smaller insect destroyed by the larger; I find the larger insect destroyed by the sparrow; I find the sparrow destroyed by the hawk; and the hawk shot down by man, who destroys numbers of different animals for his food. But this law of sacrifice does not even stop there, where we seem to have reached the highest point. Man often sacrifices his fellow-man for his own wants and necessities; nay, so mysterious is this law that even in our pleasure we do not seem to be able to get on at times without some of us sacrificing ourselves to others. In this city for instance we have many glass-blowers, everyone of whom knows very well that his days are numbered. But the community wants glass and glass is provided, and the glass-blower's life is the sacrifice paid for the gratification of this particular want of the community.

Many poor seamstresses again, die yearly in London through slaving over work given out to them at nefariously low prices, because the produce of their labours has been undersold, or the contract underlet to some grasping middle-contractor. Everywhere man seems to be harsh and pitiless to his fellow-man. The most amiable and kind-hearted person in existence cannot in modern society avoid being in some way or other a co-operator in the sacrifice and destruction of his fellow-creatures. Nor can I look forward to any period in the future, when this law will not continue in operation upon all of us, voluntarily, or involuntarily. "A hard law!" you say. Yes, a very hard law, if you stop there. But will you stop there? Fathers of families; mothers who love your children; what would you not sacrifice for your favourite child? You are a father; are you not constantly longing to take your place at your son's side, to give him the help of your counsel, to bring your past experience and past pains to bear upon his future course and if possible to substitute them for the bitter experiences he may have to undergo? You long

CHURCH SERMONS.

to say "My child, hear the story of my past sufferings and profit by it; when I was a young man I learned by bitter lessons, what I am now telling you; be guided by them and avoid the mistakes that I then made; let me bear your burden; let me stand between you and vice; let me protect you from the influences of the world as far as I can; let my sleepless nights, my thoughtful days, and my paternal griefs be warnings to you; let me suffer for you; let me be a sacrifice for you." And yet it is only a law of the human family that parents should thus sacrifice themselves for their children.

There is one sick-bed around which the thoughts of all England have circled during the last few days. Some of the details of that scene we have been enabled to realize from the descriptions of family life in that household that have been laid before the country. A widowed mother is there suffering in her watchfulness at the bedside of her eldest son; a loving and youthful wife suffers and watches, exhausted and on her knees, by the side of her stricken husband; other relations neglect everything else to come and take part in watching by that bed of sickness which all at one time feared was to be the bed of death. That was their sacrifice. "Hard," do you say? "Cruel," do you say? Do you think any of these watchers counted the hours they passed at the bedside of him they loved? No; another law was brought to bear upon that cruel law. It was a very different thing from the mere sacrifice in all its hardness, bareness and coldness.

Suppose one comes to you and tells you your house is on fire. You know your child is in the house; you rush home; you do not stop at the door to ask what progress the fire has made; you bound up stairs heedless of consequences; scorched and burned, you still nerve yourself for the last struggle; you spring forward and you rescue your child! But do you reckon that your sufferings have been hard? No; the sacrifice has been a labour of love.

Once more. We are at sea; the vessel is going down; the boats have been laden one after another with their living freight; the last boat is about to be pushed off from the sinking hull; it is quite full and you have heard again and again that there is no more room. You stand there with your wife, or your future bride, by your side, and you feel there is no hope but to go down together in the cold and pitiless ocean. Is there no room? Suddenly a voice is heard crying from the boat below that there

is just room for one. Do you jump down into the boat yourself? No; you clasp the dear one to your breast and then without asking her wish or opinion, thrust her into the boat knowing as you go down with the ship that she has been saved. Are you not happy? Yes; because you feel that your soul will go on living in the soul of that beloved one. You are going down but she is saved! "Greater love hath no man than this, that he will lay down his life for his friend." There was One my brethren who for ever took away the sting from a sacrifice like this; who evermore gilded it with love imperishable. That sting, he took away by his death upon the cross. Now what have we done with regard to this great sacrifice? Let us hope that we have taken hold of the vast sum of love contained in it and that it has become to us a saving and practical truth; trusting in which we can afford to live, and not be afraid to die.

The application of that is this; that the sacrifice you have to make is not a hard barren sacrifice, but a sacrifice of love. I said last Sunday that the law of pleasure was to be this; that whenever pleasure interfered with your life's work it must be put aside and sacrificed. But, my friends, if you do not love your life's work and do not take any interest in it, how can you learn to suffer for it? You must learn what work it is that God has given you to do and do it. If it should appear harsh and dry, you must bring such motives to bear upon it as will relieve the drudgery of it and enable you to take more enthusiastic and sympathetic views of your duty. There is no man who cannot bring the instincts of humanity to bear upon his work, however hard it may be in itself, and you must bring them to bear, each of you, upon the work your Father has given you to do.

Men do not find any difficulty in doing many disagreeable things if they are congenial to the interest of the professions to which they may be attached. The doctor is nerved to his work, often of a very unpleasant character, not so much because he is going to pocket a fee (though that is of course an inducement), but because he can say to himself when he gets home "I have done a good day's work." And even if just when sinking to sleep after a long day's exertions, he is again called up, he rises good humouredly and says to himself "This is but one of the incidents of my professional life; it is not a very pleasant one, but I was aware of the contingency when I started in my career, and I do it because I love my profession. I will go, and endea-

your to make my visit seem like a golden ray of sunshine through that dark cloud of physical suffering and disease. I take an interest in this particular case and I will go and shew how I can feel for that poor patient, yet more restless than myself." And so the doctor's sacrifice is gilded over with love.

Take the lawyer, again. He sacrifices time and comfort to prepare himself for the practice that has not yet reached his doors. He spends many long and weary hours revolving in his mind problems of law that may by and by occur to him in the actual course of business; and also the various modes in which cases have been vamped up by fraudulent and dishonest persons, taking note in his memory to avoid all such dishonorable practices and resolving always to do that which is right and just. This is to him a gilding of the sacrifice he makes for his profession.

And then, my friends, you must love yourselves. This is a duty that you owe to yourselves. It is very well to say you must love your neighbour as yourself; but if you do not love yourself at all, how is your neighbour to come off? Suppose you love yourself but miserably little; why then you will love your neighbour but miserably little also. What you have to do is to love yourself dearly; to love your body; to love your mind; to love your spirit; to treat them all well and properly. No man who does not love himself well is likely to love his neighbour well; and hence, when appetite comes and says to you "Drink that which is not good for you;" or "Drink more than is good for you; indulge in some course which will not hurt your body but which will degrade and corrupt your mind;" you must say "No; I love myself so much I cannot afford to do it." If a temptation comes to corrupt your body, you must say "No; I love my body and I have such a reverence for that which God has given me that I will not degrade my body." When you are asked to do something that will degrade your mind, say "No; I love my mind also, and I want the whole man to be formed as much as possible after the fashion of Christ. When I reflect upon the general idea of what God has intended me to be, I feel enamoured with the outline and resolved to fill it up if possible; he has evidently constituted me for a certain special individuality and I must not transgress the rule of my individuality; God has given me myself to take care of, and I must nourish and cherish myself accordingly. It is my own flesh and blood. Lord help me satisfactorily to fill

up the outline he has sketched, and to approach as nearly as possible to the lineaments of the great original; let me ever keep on the right side in the improvement and development of both body and soul."

Thus my friends you must love yourselves; and if you do love yourselves, you cannot do so without sometimes sacrificing yourselves. But when you have been kindled into a glow of enthusiasm about yourselves and your precious body and mind and spirit—which are God's,—and which are precious because God has given them to you, you may be asked "Have you nothing left for others?" To which you will say, "How much have I to suffer for others? I am part of the general fund of society; I am bound up with it and therefore I must suppress myself, and be ready to sacrifice myself, not only for my own family, but for the society in which I live. God has imposed that law of sacrifice upon me, and I must not ask how much I am to sacrifice, and how often I am to put up with the disagreeable ways of the world." It is the characteristic weakness of human nature, when you are asked how many times you will forgive your brother, to say, in your little niggardly spirit, "Seven times;" not accounting the innumerable benefits the great God has dealt out to you or the number of times you have needed to be forgiven. No, my brethren; seventy times seven if necessary. Do you ask, why? Because there is no rule of thumb in this matter at all. You must love not at all, or love all in all. There must be an absolute disposition of the mind to place itself at the disposal of the will of God. You must be prepared to give all, without (like Lot's wife) looking grudgingly behind. You do not stop to ask whether you will be burned when rushing into the house to save your child; nor to think about your being drowned when you put your wife into the boat; in fact the true principle of sacrifice becomes transformed into an irresistible motive power of action.

I know there are cases in which a man will say "Oh yes; it is all very well to talk about sacrificing yourself for society but suppose the laws of society are unjust." We will suppose for instance that the law of the land which binds a man and woman together for life, had neither compunction nor pity for them, when it was discovered they were altogether unsuited for each other, but on the contrary, threw the greatest obstacles in the way of those two persons getting outside the influence of

the intolerable temptations, their discordant life rendered them constantly subject to ; supposing that the law of the nation had provided no outlet or escape for them whatever, what are they to do ? Brethren we all have to suffer from imperfect laws, more or less, and we can only say that these are the exceptions and not the rule of married life. " But then," you will say, " it is poor comfort to be the exception if the minority is not to be represented." There are many subjects however, my brethren, upon which it is very difficult to come to any sound judgment or conclusion. In the case I have just been suggesting it may very often be found that the parties have only themselves to blame for their condition. They have not in fact began to look into the law of sacrifice early enough. In how many cases of matrimonial dissatisfaction may we not say to the parties " If you had driven more carefully over the stones the first six months of your time, do you not think you would have had far fewer upsets afterwards ? If you had had sufficient self-restraint and common sense to have borne and forborne with each other you would never have found yourselves in the evil case of having a quarrel with the laws of society as at present constituted."

But I judge no man. If a man so situated comes to me and says " I find my condition intolerable," I can only reply, that he is his own master and that by his own conduct he must stand or fall. If any man choose to set up his individual conscience against the conscience of the nation and the laws of society, he does so upon his own responsibility. It may be that he has a full justification in the eyes of God though not in the eyes of men ; but on the contrary, that his disobedience to the laws may have made him an outcast from the society in which he lived. If he be wrong, it will go against him in the great day when God makes up the number of His jewels.

But, my brethren, Christ never wishes his disciples to be unhappy. He does not want to be asking you constantly how much you have enjoyed yourselves. He came in fact in order that your joy might be full. God does not want to know how many pleasures you have had during the week. He means you to have as many as you can with propriety. All his requirement will be " Are you ready ?" When He calls upon you, He wants no artificial suffering ; no laceration of the flesh ; no going to church when you are sick or dead-tired, and it is painful to you ; no making yourself an object of pity to your clergy-

CHURCH SERMONS.

man and everybody around you. "Are you ready?" is all He wants to know.

To-morrow morning when you begin your life in the world again, you may have some little fretful suffering child to exercise your patience; do you feel inclined to treat it kindly? Do you feel yourself ready to treat your servants and dependants with consideration? Do you think you will be able on your way to business to-morrow, to resolve that you will treat your clerks properly? You know there are certain people you have to live with, or who will in some way come across your sympathies; are you willing to sacrifice your own personal feelings and temper in order to fulfil your duty to these people in the position to which God has called you?

If you feel any hesitation about your reply, just turn for a moment to the figure of One, who walks in the morning light as the mist arises from the garden, through which a voice falls upon the ear, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." How paltry, how miserable, do all our difficulties and troubles appear when we reflect upon the sufferings of Him who bore our sins upon his cross up the hill of death, and died there for our sakes! who took the cup of bitterness from His father's hand, and drained it to the dregs! "It is the cup my father hath sent me, shall I not drink it?" he said; and thus was finished that great work which has been the means of sending down that vast flood of illuminating and heavenly love upon the heads of his followers.

But there are some people who cannot be brought to think of these matters; people who call themselves moral men. There is nothing more dreary however to my mind than the moral man. I know a considerable number of these moral men who tell you they don't want any theology thrust down their throats; that they are going to act as sensible people and live moral lives. I do not mean to say that their efforts so far have not succeeded, but I say it is a hard and miserable life to live, because of the constant sacrifices they have to make. They are walking always below the level of the Holy Spirit. To see these things in their true light you must rise to the higher level, where the heart instinctively grasps them, and acts upon them, because you are animated by a spirit of enthusiasm as well as by the divine law. In other words because the duty of sacrifice has been the rule of your life.

Lessons from the Life of Christ.

BY

THE REV. E. G. CHARLESWORTH.

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF WEST
ACKLAM, MIDDLESBOROUGH-ON-TEES.

“And in those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judæa.”—Matthew iii. 1.

IN this age when prophets of all kinds are so numerous that we can scarcely distinguish between the major and the minor ones, it is not easy to realize a period in the world's history extending to nearly four hundred years when no prophet appeared, but when the providence of God seems to be most silent, it is a sign that it is about to be eloquent.

No one worthy to be called a great prophet had arisen in Israel for three and four generations, but now the voice of one greater than any before began to be heard, “in those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judæa.” Next to himself Christ said he was the greatest of all who had been born; “verily I say unto you; among them that are born of woman there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” The sacred historian has given us a glimpse of something very interesting in him before this. He was born long after his parents had ceased to hope for the blessing of children. One

day a messenger from God came to tell them they should have a son. He was to be great and good; "he shall," said the angel, "be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb, and many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God." There were at this time two families to whom a special message from God had come. The birth of Christ had been announced. The two families were connected with one another by blood: the mother of Christ and the mother of John were cousins. They had a happy meeting together, one telling their secret to the other. It was indeed a time to be inspired with poetry, and from the occasion came forth that beautiful hymn—

"My soul doth magnify the Lord
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,
Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

How true this line is. For eighteen hundred years the memory of this village maiden has lived, growing more and more vivid. No king or queen has an immortality equal to hers. All generations have called her blessed because she has blessed all generations. The world has been grateful to her because she has been the mother of a true Saviour. It would be strange if she were not remembered, for at every turn of our lives, we reap the blessings which flowed through her from God. We have reason indeed to re-echo the words of the angel of comfort and sympathy, Gabriel, "Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee blessed art thou among women." Both these women who were so greatly honoured of God, were pious good women. "Them that honour Me," saith the Lord, "I will honour." A blessing greater or less is sure to alight upon all who are worthy to be called hand-maidens of God, and it is an ambition within reach of all of us. If we can only throw a mite into the treasury of God it is accounted by him as equal to the gifts of the rich.

There was, we have seen, a family relationship between Christ and John, but the spiritual tie between them was much stronger. John was the preparer of the Lord's way. It was this that winged his arrows; it was this that gave his gestures and energies invincible strength; "repent ye for Christ is at hand." You see in him that humility, which always attends true great-

ness ; "I baptize with water, but there cometh one after me mightier than I, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

It is a beautiful picture to see these two children growing up into manhood, increasing in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man, the one knowing the exact position and spiritual rank of the other. You see none of those unworthy jealousies which are so frequent in those who are of the same calling. They speak well of one another. "He must increase but I must decrease," "He that cometh from above is above all ;" these were the words of John as there came to him the first sweet notes of his Master's voice. A thrill of holy joy ran through him in the wilderness when he saw the first flow of the tide for which he had been preparing ; "the friend of the bridegroom," he exclaimed, "which standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, this therefore my joy is fulfilled." Soon afterwards he had the delight of seeing him, and he instantly recognized his divine character and mission, "behold," he said, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." These were delightful times, so sweet for their simplicity. Here were two beings on whose revelations were to be laid the foundations of a new moral and spiritual world, known and loved only by a few village people, yet knowing that none had ever been given by God a greater work to do. They were filled with a high enthusiasm, yet were examples of humility. There were great thoughts of heart in them, and the power of the highest overshadowed them. One day they met on the banks of "the Jordan," that ancient river—the river Jordan—and the Greater was baptized of the Less. John thought it an honour beyond his merit, "I have need to be baptized of thee and comest thou to me ?" but Christ answered "suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." A beautiful white cloud in the⁷ shape of a dove descended upon Christ, and out of the cloud there came a voice saying, "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

John had, by this time passed, from the villages bordering the great wilderness, inland to the towns of Judæa, relaxing none of his boldness. His message was the same among the rich and educated as amongst the poor and ignorant, "repent, repent."

That was something which they all equally needed. Pride sometimes swells the heart to say, your sins are not mine, but if another man's sins are not yours, you have sins that he has not. We must all conclude ourselves under sin. The rich man's sins and the poor man's sins are of a somewhat different class, but there is not much difference in their weight. Just now you hear much about the war between the upper and lower classes of society. It would be well if each class fought with their sins, for the message of John the Baptist is equally needed by both of them, "repent, repent." John delivered his text and his sermon to both classes and he had no favourites. He did not even spare the king, for the true minister of God cannot be a respecter of persons. It is quite right that there should be differences of rank, for, God has ordained that there should be; but we are all alike in one thing, we have all souls to be saved, we are all immortal. Your neighbour is richer than you, but you have as valuable a soul as he has. You have as rich an inheritance as he has within you, but you must both prove your titles to it. That word which John spoke out so boldly is the first word in the title page. You cannot be saved unless you repent of your sins. You can never know you are forgiven until you repent; you may pray, you may shed tears; you may resolve, but it will all be in vain unless you repent; and if you truly repent you will as certainly feel that you are forgiven, as you feel that you have recovered your health after you have been sick.

It is said that we are the creatures of circumstances, but we ought not to be. If we had no conscience, if we had no spirit, if we had no Bible, if we had no Christ, if we had no John the Baptist, we should have some excuse for being the creatures of circumstances, but God has given us both internal and external revelations to enable us to breast the tide of circumstances. We ought to control circumstances and not to let circumstances control us; and the rich have, in a moral and spiritual sense, a much harder fight with circumstances than the poor. "How hardly," said the Saviour, "shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven," and if he had been asked the reason for saying this he would have answered, "Because riches are a means of temptation." John the Baptist knew this; he was an only

CHURCH SERMONS.

son and at home with his parents; was almost an object of idolatry; but he shook off all luxuries from him, clothed himself roughly, lived on coarse fare, and went into the wilderness to preach the Gospel. It was so with him who, as he beautifully says, "coming after me is preferred before me." Christ might have had the kingdoms of the world but he preferred poverty, even not having, at times, where to lay his head. It is when men take this world out into their view that the desire for riches passes all bounds of moderation.

John the Baptist regarded this world merely as a school or training ground for another, and therefore he thought poverty a help rather than a hardship. There is a great system of compensations in the order of providence, which, both worlds considered, shews that happiness is very equally distributed in the world; how is it then that there is so much misery? Because both rich and poor trample their sources of happiness underfoot. The poor man in his cottage may be quite as happy as the nobleman in his castle, if he uses life as he ought. But neither the poor man or the nobleman do this, hence come to both misery and discontent.

Look now how little John the Baptist was the creature of circumstances, his parents would, no doubt, as too many parents do, have made their only child a worldling, self-willed, fond of pleasure, effeminate and pettish, but his conscience rebelled against this; the soldier spirit was in him; he must draw his sword against the sin and evil of the world, and he did not draw it in vain. Hundreds and thousands answered to that shrill trumpet call of his, "repent, repent," and there were added daily to the Church such as should be saved.

It is a lesson to us to cut asunder our natural propensities and put on the new man which after God is created unto righteousness and true holiness. These spiritual soldiers are what the world wants; how much better it would be if people instead of quarrelling with their neighbours, fought with the evil in their own hearts. How much better it would be if instead of nation rising up against nation, they waged war to the death with their national sins and weaknesses. John the Baptist lived the life of a good soldier of Christ and died the death of one. He told Herod of his sins and Herod killed him for it. But he could not

CHURCH SERMONS.

kill the principles that John had sown in the world ; he could not kill the example he had left behind him ; he could not kill his own conscience which John's preaching had set on fire ; and John only lost his body—which he had never shewn much care for—and in losing that he gained for his soul, a crown of everlasting life and an eternal weight of glory.



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 7.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

*Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.*

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1871.

"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest in the flesh."—1 Timothy iii, 16.

At length, my brethren, the Advent season has reached its close, and we are at Christmas eve. The period of expectation is over, and we are almost entering upon the early hours of that great and blessed festival on which the Christian Church keeps the birthday of her Founder ; the day upon which He whom Christendom names the Saviour of the world was born of a human mother and entered this world to take His place among the things and scenes of Time. The Apostle's words to Timothy put before us forcibly and concisely the great master-truth which gives Christmas its meaning ; "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest in the flesh." It is not the birthday of a mere Sage and Philanthropist, which we celebrate to-morrow. That might be in itself reasonable and natural enough ; but Christmas means much more than that. Christmas means the entrance into the human world of One who was at once its Architect and its Judge, under conditions which made Him the peer of the poorest and youngest amongst us. It is the introduction of a new principle of life into humanity which we thus commemorate. It is in fact nothing less than a new starting point in the world's history. It is the opening of a new fountain of salvation for man, unknown to him before.

Now, the words "God was manifest in the flesh," are translated from a sentence the exact meaning of which is doubtful, and therefore this reading in the English version has been made the subject of some criticism. For in the original Greek manuscripts, the presence or absence of a single bar across the centre of a single letter, makes all the difference between reading the sentence "*God* was manifest in the flesh," or "*Who* was manifest in the flesh." It is clearly impossible here and now to enter upon a full and earnest discussion of the purely critical question, "What, according to the evidence of the ancient system of notation supplied by existing manuscripts, are the probabilities with regard to the insertion or excision of that particular bar across that particular letter?" Perhaps I ought not to conceal from you the conviction that there is not sufficient reason for changing the received version of the text so as to alter the rendering of our English Bible. But even if the reading "*God*" should be given up, and the reading "*Who*" be substituted for it, the change in the real drift and meaning of the sentence is not so great as is sometimes supposed. For it seems quite clear that whether this word be "God," or "Who," the Apostle is beginning a quotation, probably from some Christian hymn of the Apostolical period. Now, if the quotation begins with the word "God," it is obviously sufficiently complete in itself. If it begins with "Who," or even with "He who," it is evidently an incomplete fragment which refers to some person named in a preceding part of the hymn which is not quoted. To whom then does—to whom can—this "Who" refer? Here the word translated "manifest" will assist us. If the person spoken of in the text had no existence before his birth it would not have been natural to speak of him at his birth as being made "manifest in the flesh." When an infant is born in any of our families we do not say it is "made manifest in the flesh." Why not? Because though that infant has an immortal soul, distinct from its body, although linked with it, and in a certain very real sense, manifested through it, yet that soul had no existence *before* the formation and birth of the body of the infant; and we do not speak of a thing being "manifested" at the moment of its beginning to exist. The meaning of "manifestation," in all the languages of the world is not opposed to the idea of non-existence, but pre-supposes the idea of a hidden existence. Nay more "manifestation" obviously implies a previously unmanifested existence; and therefore the phrase "manifest in the flesh," would be inappropriate and absurd as applied to an ordinary human infant at its birth. We might as well speak of a house being "manifested" in stone or brick when it was built; or a railway embankment as being "manifested" when it was thrown up. Manifestation, observe,—at the risk of repetition let me be quite

clear—manifestation clearly implies the previous existence of the person or thing manifested. It marks a point in the history of that person or thing; the point at which he, or it, passes out of hidden into public and visible life. If then the text speaks of a “manifestation in the flesh,” whether it terms the person so manifested “God,” or whether it does not so name Him, it must, at least, be speaking of one who existed before this manifestation took place; or in other words before his birth. Apart then from all that follows in the later clauses of the quotation,—all that at every step rivets and intensifies the argument, this expression can be true only of that One Being who alone of all the persons named in Holy Scripture can be said to have existed before His birth into the world. The Hebrew and the Christian scriptures know nothing of any Indian theory of the transmigration of souls; and the true meaning of the words of the text is, that He who was before John the Baptist, and therefore greater than the Baptist; He whose glory Isaiah saw, not merely by prophetic anticipation, but in actual vision; He who was already existing *eternally* ere Abraham was; He who was with God before all things were made that were made; He, who was with God in the beginning; did at length, by being born of a woman, made under the law, make Himself manifest to the senses of men.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him; without Him was not anything made that was made.” “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

God therefore was manifest in the flesh. What, let us reverently ask, were the limits—and what was the nature—of His manifestation? It is true for instance to say that God is manifested in nature; in the physical world; that His attributes shine forth through all His works around us. “The invisible things of Him, says the Apostle, are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.” Still more strikingly is God manifested in the human conscience; in that unchanging law of right and wrong which every man finds within himself, whether his sense of right and wrong be well informed and educated or not; and which speaks to him in the language, which cannot be misunderstood, of its Author. Who is He then who has thus lodged in the inmost sanctuary of every soul, an everpresent witness of His existence, a witness to His claims? That which may be known of God, in a state of nature, says St. Paul, is manifest to the Gentiles, for God hath shewed Himself unto them.

Once more, God is manifested in the course of events, or, as we should say in history. The play of His attributes may be

CHURCH SERMONS.

traced in its slow transitions and developments from one polity to another—from one ascendancy to another—from one civilization to another ; and at its great crisis, when men dream that God is asleep, and that He is letting things take their course, and that all things continue as they were from the beginning of Creation, He, as the psalmist puts it, suddenly awakes as one out of sleep, and like a giant refreshed with wine. And His presence, His power, His justice, His love are felt to be penetrating and irradiating great contemporary events, and men cry out with the prophet, in the ecstasy of their sense of nearness, "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name. Leave us not, O Lord, our God."

But the manifestation spoken of in the text is clearly distinct from God's self manifestation in nature, in conscience, or in history. It is His manifestation *in the flesh*. That expression, mark you, ties it down to human nature as the medium of the manifestation, and identifies it not merely with the spiritual, but with the bodily part of man's composite being. It is a question here, not of a voice in conscience ; still less of inferences, however legitimate and however irresistible, that may be drawn from nature and from history. It is a question of a revelation clothed in flesh and blood, and addressed to sense. The text does not say that this manifestation was made visible in a single life—the life of Jesus of Nazareth—and yet the rest of the passage makes it certain that this was the writer's meaning. Unless the whole race of man was "justified in the Spirit and received up into glory," it is impossible to avoid restricting this manifestation in the flesh, to the *human* nature, the body and soul, of Jesus of Nazareth. The Apostle means that God was manifested (we may fairly say), in this one member of the human family as He was never in any other. Other men had embodied and reflected some one or more rays of the character of God—this man, His loving-kindness ; that, His justice ; another, His veracity. In Jesus, God's whole moral life was manifested. It was not manifested partially or in piecemeal, but in its integrity and completeness. Nay more, the whole range of the Divine attributes was there ; and when our Lord acted and spoke, God, in His perfect nature became manifest to those who witnessed Him. Accordingly, instead of saying that in Christ the intelligence, or the thought of God, was pre-eminently embodied, it being implied that other elements of the Divine life were not equally so, St. Paul says "in Christ dwells *all* the fulness of the Godhead." Instead of saying "He that hath seen Me, hath learned something of what God's mercy is ; or something about His truth ;" Jesus Christ says, absolutely and without any limitation or reserve, "He that hath seen Me *hath seen the Father*."

It has been felt to be a difficulty by a certain school of

modern thinkers that this self-manifestation of God should be represented by Christian history to have taken place in a single human life. God, they contend, if manifested in humanity at all, must be manifested in the whole human race. As they would have it, His manifestation is distributed throughout all the races of men, throughout all the course of human generations; and they contend, that the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, involves an unphilosophical limitation to a single life, of that which is properly the attribute and glory of humanity as a whole. This view was forcibly put forth by the German writer Schelling, and it has since been repeated in various forms. It really is connected with the pantheistic notion that God is not merely the Author of the universe and as such seen through His works; but that He *is* the Universe, and that the human race, being the highest form of life—the highest form of which we have any knowledge or experience, manifests in its various complications of character, all the different attributes of God Himself. Now, if God were not a moral being,—if God were only the highest *Intelligence* of which we have any conception, but not necessarily also perfect wisdom, perfect veracity, perfect justice, and perfect love, then there would be more to be said for this notion than there is. It might then have been pleaded that the boundless resources and versatility of the Infinite Mind would be best exhibited through the powers and the activities of many minds. And no doubt this is true so far, that all intellectual powers are the gift of God; rays, so to speak from the Divine intelligence, though they be applied to purposes which do Him wrong. But then God *is* essentially a moral being. Our fundamental notion about God is not that which He has lodged in our intelligence, as the First cause, or Author of the Universe; but that which He has lodged in our conscience as the Author of that law of right and wrong, which we have within us, and which is a ray of His eternal nature. We can, without doing any sort of violence to our intelligence, conceive that *God need never have made this Universe at all*. He would not have been less Himself, had He chosen to have lived on in the solitary Eternity (as we must phrase it when we speak of these mysteries from a human point of view) which preceded creation, *but we cannot conceive that God could ever be untruthful or unjust*. Why not? Because we cannot conceive that injustice and untruthfulness can, under any circumstances, be right. We cannot, without tearing up our moral nature by the very roots, suppose that the moral laws which as applied to relations between intelligent beings, we term laws of justice and truthfulness; can ever have been other than they are. Were they, then, eternal as they are—were they in their eternity a something independent of God?

CHURCH SERMONS.

That cannot be ; because in that case God would not be the one Eternal self-existent Being. These laws must, as being eternal, be laws of the Life of the One, self-existent, Eternal Being.

It is no objection to this to say, that it must equally be always true, that things equal to the same are equal to one another, because there is no sort of difficulty in granting that the laws of pure mathematics being, as they are, unanswerable truths, so must also be the laws of the Eternal life of God not less than are the first principles of morals.

Now observe, if this be so, God could not have manifested Himself in the human race as a whole without doing violence to His most essential nature. He could not have done this—humanity being what it is—without mingling His self-manifestation with all the impurity and falsehood, all the high-handed unrighteousness, all the degrading meanness, which, alas ! make up the history of our race. Clearly then, human nature being what it is ; a manifestation of God in the flesh which is to render Him His due—which is really to enlighten and to save us—must have been in some sinless individual, in one whose life should not degrade the high sanctity of the manifested God. The Christian faith teaches us that once only has such an individual been found in human history—Jesus of Nazareth. In Him the one sinless man, was revealed the perfection of the indwelling God. His supernatural birth of a virgin mother was quite in keeping with this high, this unique, office of His manhood to be the temple of the Deity, and inseparably united to it. And it is this which makes the record of His life contained in the four gospels, inspire us with an interest, unlike that caused by any other narrative on which we can set our eyes. It is a history not merely of a perfect human character, but of our God manifested in the flesh.

Why was God thus manifested ? Many answers in detail may be given. To instruct us ; to sanctify us ; to redeem us. But the general answer is, to bring God nearer to the thoughts and hearts of His intelligent moral creatures. Certainly He is already, in virtue of His omnipresence very near to each one of us. He is the atmosphere in which we live. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." But though thus near in fact, He is remote from thought. When we try to think constantly of an Infinite Being, whose power has no limits, whose knowledge has no limits, whose love has no limits, and whose justice has no limits, we very soon find,—if we are endeavouring to attach any meaning to words,—that we are straining our minds more and more painfully and desperately upwards towards that which ever remains far beyond them, remote, inaccessible. Moreover in doing this, such is the weakness of human thought ; as being that of finite minds endeavouring to take the measure

of the Infinite ; from the very nature of the case we are constantly tempted to discard the idea of *eternity* as something altogether beyond our grasp, in the hope, forsooth, of one day reaching a something higher up which will be within it. That application of Locke's maxim, (however legitimate it may appear in a vulgar sense) "*that nothing was to be believed that was not intelligible,*" is one which cannot be taken into the region of religious thought without grave consequences.

These are especially observable in the history of Deism. In the last century the Deists were engaged in a continuous endeavour to spiritualize, as they would term it, their idea of God. The only proper course, as some of them maintained, was to eliminate from their thoughts of God, all that they could not bring within the compass and control of human reason. They could not really so dilate their finite minds, as to embrace the idea of the Infinite, they therefore only repeated the experiences of some abstract thinkers in the ancient pagan world. Continually sublimating—spiritualizing—their little stock of residuary truth ; continually distilling, and repeating the process of distillation, upon their already meagre idea of God, that idea became at last a mere apex of thought, so wholly without outline, without substance, so rare, so faint, as to finally fade away, and die into a sublime nonentity beyond, which did not admit of being brought home by words to any human understanding. And here it is to be observed that the greatest stumbling blocks to the comprehension of the idea of God which deistic reason has discovered for itself, have turned, not so much upon His omnipotence, His majesty, His awfulness, as upon His benevolence, His love, and His condescension. Those who have believed in God at all, have felt that to say He was The Almighty, was the *very least* they could say about Him ; but they have been impatient of admitting a single trace of His real, active love. They have been ready indeed to put up with the idea of a passive, unproductive Benevolence, smiling from some remote corner of the Universe, over the tears and sorrows of a creation which it was too impotent or too sublime to reach ; but an active, helping, interfering, *practical* love—a love studying human sorrow in detail, and in detail assuaging it—a love making sorrow a discipline, if men would only have it so—a love which man had only to sue for, and he was certain to obtain consolation here, and perfect happiness hereafter ; that was an idea of the character of God they could neither entertain nor comprehend. There is no one truth in the whole range of attributes of the Divine Character, that has been more persistently assailed by deistic writers than God's special providence,—I would rather say of God's *providence*, because if it be not *special*, it is practically no providence at all.

These writers have had in view as the Ideal to which they would shape their thought of God, the image of some earthly potentate so occupied with the administration of great affairs of state, as to be unable to give thought and time to the wants of his individual subjects. In the case of a great earthly monarch, this idea of governing capacity might be true enough, simply because man's faculties are limited. With most of us, the mind is ordinarily more absorbed in the contemplation of general laws and principles, than in the study of particular details and circumstances. But then the higher we ascend in the scale of human intelligence, the more clearly do we discern the power of combining attention to general laws, with a careful regard for particulars and details. It is in this combination, and not apart from it, that we find among our fellow-men, the most remarkable instances of true genius and ability; and can we doubt that in that Mind which is above all minds, there is a complete and consummate union of these different powers, so that He who is the Author of the mighty and comprehensive laws which govern the movements whether of heavenly bodies or of the moral world, does also really, not merely without derogating from His exalted dignity, but in very virtue of His Divine perfection, number every hair of our heads, and take note of every sparrow that falls to the ground?

Reason, I say—reason alone will carry us thus far. Reason resists the notion that it is any part of God's majesty to be like an Eastern Sultan powerful to make laws which others only can administer, and to effect on a great scale and by general measures, the happiness or misery of his subjects, but incapable from the nature of the case, and not merely from considerations of his personal dignity, of entering into the particular trials, hopes, and fears of the millions of subjects, who live around and beneath his throne. Still, although right reason does so resist; our feeble thought when it is not upon the strain finds it difficult to dwell upon this special providence as an actual fact. Say, my brethren, is it not so? Especially when under the stress of great sorrows, great calamities, or great disappointments, so long as all is invisible and abstract—so long as Providence seems to have no embodiment, no expression,—so long as nothing constantly meets the soul's eye which so summarizes all that we can cry out with the Apostle in this afternoon's lesson, "Herein is love; not that we loved God but that He loved us."

It would indeed have been strange, if God—a really living and loving God—had implanted in us these yearnings, for close and constant contact with Himself, and had not satisfied them. It would have been wonderful indeed, if He had not reinforced these anticipations of reason, if He had not elevated them into certainties by some sort of special interference or revelation. And we Christians believe that He has done so, by becoming manifest

in the flesh. He has not disappointed that instinct of yearning love which He has given us. He has placed Himself within our reach. He has presented Himself to us under a form that takes our hearts captive, and which stays, without suppressing, the thought that seeks Him. Nothing in human life, as we all know, makes us so much at home, or surrounds us with all that is most intelligible, most tender in the life of our common humanity, as a babe in its cradle; and the Christmas message, "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger," was the Divine answer to the cry of the human heart seeking a God whom it could really love, amid the ultimate abstractions of speculation. Henceforth, God while in His essential majesty, He is necessarily inaccessible to the human understanding—(we can indeed, *apprehend*, we cannot *comprehend* Him); is nevertheless, in His Incarnate Life, the possession of every individual human heart that wills to have Him, so that we may each of us have the privilege of crying "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." This is our God; we have waited for Him; He will come and save us.

And here let me note two points.

Christianity has been from the first what it was in the manger of Bethlehem. It has ever had two sides, one meeting the bodily eye, another the eye of faith. The visible earthly side of Christianity has seemed to those who have failed to understand its Divine character, to be its all. Throughout the ages of Christendom the eye of flesh has gazed exclusively, if I may so speak, upon the Babe lying in the manger; while faith has sat by, watching the angels chanting "Glory to God in the highest!" Look at our Christian literature for instance. Look at the Bible. To sight it is a beautiful collection of history, of poetry, and of moral precepts, coming down to us from far off ages, and entitled on literary grounds to our homage and admiration. *I do not say that it is exempt from error, or that it is above criticism.* To faith it is the Word of God; it is the unveiling of His mind towards us His creatures continued, through a series of organs of His will, through many ages, until at last it reaches a climax in His blessed Son—in His words, and in the writings of His apostles.

Look at Christian worship. The natural sight sees in it only the employment of such and such words; the observance of such and such forms; the following of certain rules which have come down from past ages; the partaking publicly of a little bread and wine; the sprinkling a little water on an infant's brow. But to the eye of faith all this is lighted up by a sense of His presence to Whom the worship is offered, and apart from whom the ceremonials observed are altogether unmeaning. The words are felt to be addressed to a Living Being; the baptismal water

is the channel of the grace of a new life ; the bread and wine the veil of a Saviour present to bless and save His people. Look at the Christian life. To sight it is a fussy unintelligible round of little duties, little charities, little observances, little self restraints, now and then perhaps rising to the heroic, but generally trivial, petty, unpretending. To faith all this detail is seen to be the harmonious language of an illuminated soul expressing instinctively and loyally its devotion to the Perfect Moral Being, who by creating and redeeming it has laid it under an obligation—not to return an equivalent (that indeed is impossible), but to render the homage of continuous uninterrupted love.

By God's manifestation of Himself in the flesh, the chasm between earth and heaven has been bridged over, and a real communication with God, through His blessed Son and through Him only, is open to man. This is the real character of the great festival we are now about to celebrate. This it is that makes Christ's birthday so unlike any other birthday in the world's history. It is not merely an anniversary in human affairs of the highest order ; it marks a change in the relations between earth and heaven. The two natures which in the person of Jesus are inseparably joined, touch two spheres of being,—there the uncreated and the Divine, here the created, the dependent, the human. And in virtue of His having these two natures He is the one Mediator between God and man, He, the man Christ Jesus. We lay hold of His pure and sacred manhood, and we come into real communion with the Deity.

We crowd by faith around His cradle ; we accompany Him through His active life ; we listen to His parables and discourses ; we witness over again His miracles ; and then we follow Him to His cross and kneel there praying in spirit, that on us, too, in all our weakness and in all our sin, there may fall some drops of that cleansing blood ; we are in truth, throughout, holding communion with the Deity. It is God's perfection ; God's example ; God's teaching ; God's pardoning love with which we are thus placed in contact. Each word and each act of His human life brings before us some new truth about God's character, and of God's dealing with us as His creatures. God in fact—as St. Paul put it—God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto us our trespasses. God grant, my friends, that a deep sense of these most essential truths may accompany us throughout the happy festival of to-morrow. That blessed day, like the infant in the manger, has a human side as well as a divine. It is an occasion for family greetings, for kindly intercourse, and for friendly courtesies which in very many cases will not occur again throughout the year. It has also a joy and brightness, all its own, some rays of which fall even upon those who know nothing of its higher claims upon

CHURCH SERMONS.

the Christian's conscience. Let us not, however, despise this side of the day because it is not all ; because it is unspeakably less than all ; but let us not over-estimate it. Christmas has its true meaning, only for those who are leading new lives ; for those to whom God's manifestation in the flesh is always foremost in their thoughts, and to whom the importance of that event, is such that nothing else can possibly compare with it. It is well if we know anything of the happiness of Christmas, to turn our knowledge to some practical account. Upon this day of the manifestation of the love of God, we may each of us do some act of kindness in His honour to some one of our poorer and suffering brethren. There must be many, only too many, natural recipients of such bounty known to many of us. There must be some known to all of us. There must be some service which each one of us can do for the honour of Jesus, even though he be the youngest or the poorest amongst us. If we cannot give our time, we may perhaps give food, if we cannot give food, we may give a little money ; if not money, clothes. We can pay a welcome visit ; we can offer some of that sympathy which is so much needed by those who get very little sympathy in this world. Only let each one in this vast congregation make up his or her mind to do some one such thing to-morrow, in honour of Jesus Christ our Lord, and think how much happiness would thereby be diffused. The more we can each of us do, the better ; the more heartily and cheerfully we do what little we do, the better. Above all, the more unostentatiously—if it may be without any mention whatever of what we do to any one human being—the more humbly we do, what we do in honour of Him who veiled His Divine glory beneath a human form, once more I say, the better.



A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

(ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY, D.D.)

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

IN THE AFTERNOON OF INNOCENT'S DAY, DECEMBER 28, 1871.

(Addressed more especially to the Young.)

“And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.”—Luke ii, 40.

This day is called the day of the Holy Innocents, because it calls on us to remember the death of those little children who were killed in Bethlehem at the time of our Saviour's birth. It is also a day famous in the history of this Abbey, for it was on this day, more than 800 years ago, that this great church was finished by its first founder, King Edward the Confessor, who was himself an innocent and guileless man, almost like a little child. We have thought therefore, that it might be good to mark this day by gathering together here as many children as could come, and to put before them the example which our Saviour set to all children, by having been Himself a little child—a little boy—such as those who are here to-day. For this purpose the different passages of Scripture, that have been sung and read to-day have been selected. The eighth Psalm has been chosen that we might see from it, how little children may be taught to find out the glories of God in the works of Nature, the beautiful sights and sounds that they see and hear around them; the fifteenth Psalm in order to show how from our earliest years down to our latest age, that in which God finds most pleasure is the humble, pure, truthful, honourable mind; and the hundred and twenty-seventh Psalm in order to impress upon parents what great gifts are given to them in their children; and then the Anthem has been chosen in order to remind all who are young, how precious to them are the days of their youth, and

how the one thing which they must bear in mind, from first to last, is to fear God and keep His commandments—for this is the whole duty of man. The hymn has likewise been chosen, to show how all of us, even the youngest, may come to our gracious Saviour to ask Him to have pity upon us. Then the Lessons have been chosen, the first in order to remind you how little Samuel knelt upon his knees, morning and evening, waiting for the voice of God to tell him what he was to do, and the second, which is the one I will specially speak of now, is the example of our Saviour Himself as a little child.

Let me then take these words that may be useful both to the parents and friends of those children who are here, and also I hope to the children themselves, if they will listen to what is said. First of all then, we are told that “the child”—that is the child Jesus—“grew.” He grew in stature and He grew in character and in goodness. He did not stand still. Although it was God Himself who was revealed to us in the life of Jesus Christ this did not prevent Jesus Christ from being made like unto us in all things sin only excepted. It has been reverently and truly said—

“ Was not our Lord, a little child,
Taught by degrees to pray ;
By father dear and mother mild,
Instructed day by day.”

Yes, He was ; we need not fear to say so. Each one of us whether old or young, must remember that progress, improvement, advancement, change into something better and better, wiser and wiser, year by year—this is the only condition, and the only way to become like Christ, and consequently like God. Do not think that you must always be as you are now. No, you will grow up gradually to be something very different. You must increase and grow in mind, as well as in body, in wisdom, as well as in stature. The world moves on, and you and all of us must move with it. God calls everyone to something better, something higher and higher which you and I and the whole world must reach by steadily advancing towards it.

There are three things especially, which the text puts before us for our consideration. First, it speaks of His strength of character. It says “He waxed strong in spirit.” Strong ! what a word is that for all of you my dear children. You know—

CHURCH SERMONS.

little boys especially, know how to value and honour those who are strong in body—the strong limb, the fleet foot, the sturdy arm, the active frame, you do well to honour these things; they are God's gifts. The frame, the body which can endure blows without flinching, which can toil without fatigue, which can win the race, or conquer in the game, or vanquish in the struggle—these are what all wish to have; but what this strength is to the body, the strength of character is to the mind. A stout heart, that is what you want; a stout heart which shall be able to resist all the temptations to do wrong, which scorns to tell a lie, which will never consent to be betrayed into doing what is dishonourable. A strong hardy conscience which fixes itself upon matters of real importance, and which will not trifle with, will not waste its powers on things of no concern. Therefore I say, be stronger and stronger every year. I could not say to you, perhaps, be stronger in body every year, for that is not within our own power, but I can say, and do say to you be strong in spirit, be strong in mind, be strong in character, be stout of heart, for this does come by trying to have it; it comes by always bearing in mind that it will come if you strive to get it; it comes to those who are determined to seek it. Be strong, therefore, and very courageous.

The next thing which the text speaks of is the wisdom of Jesus. It says "the child grew, and was filled with wisdom." Wisdom, as it were, was poured into Him, and His mind opened wider and wider to take it in. He drunk in whatever wisdom there was in the knowledge of those about Him. He drunk in the heavenly wisdom also, which comes down from the fountain of all wisdom. You too, my children, have this to gain day by day; those of you who are sent to school are sent there for that very purpose, to have your minds opened to take in all that your teachers can pour into them, to be ready for this instruction and wisdom whenever it comes to you—from books, from looking at what you see about you in the world, from experience, from conversation with others as you grow older in life. You need not be old before your time, but you must, even now, be making the best use of all your time. These are the golden days which will never come back to you; which, if once lost, can never be entirely made up again. Our great King

Alfred used to regret in after years, nothing so much as that owing to his long wanderings and troubles when young, he had not had the opportunity of regular instruction at school. Seek, therefore, for wisdom ; pray for it, determine to have it, and God who gives to those who ask for it, will give it to you. Try to gain it as our Lord gained it when He was a child by hearing and by asking questions. By hearing, that is by being teachable, and humble and modest, by fixing your attention on what you have to learn and also as He did, by asking questions ; that is by trying to know the meaning of what you learn, by cross-questioning yourselves, by enquiring right and left, so as to fill up the blanks in your minds. Nothing is more charming to see, than a little child listening, not interrupting, but eager to hear what is taught. Nothing is more charming than to see a little child asking questions. That is the very way by which we are able to know whether you take in with profit, what has been taught you ; and that is just what our Saviour did when He was twelve years old.

And the third thing is the grace and favour of God, or, as it says at the end of the chapter—"grace and favour with God and man." It is the grace, the goodness and the graciousness of God, which calls forth grace and goodness, and graciousness in man. Our blessed Lord had this always within Him. It increased more and more. It increased as He grew older, as He saw more and more of the work which was given Him to do. He felt more and more that God was His Father, and that men were His brothers, and that grace and loving-kindness were the dearest and most precious gifts from God to man, from man to man, and from man to God. He was subject to His parents ; He did what they told Him, and so He became dear to them. He was kind and gentle, and courteous to those about Him, so that they always liked to see Him, when He came in and out amongst them. And so may it be with you. Look upon God as your dear Father in heaven who loves you, and who wishes nothing but your happiness. Look upon your school-fellows and companions, as brothers to whom you must show whatever kindness and forbearance you can, at every turn. Look, especially you who are a little older, look upon your younger companions as those whom God has put under your special charge to protect, and to guide, and to save, and to make happy. Depend upon it any kindness to a little schoolfellow or a little

CHURCH SERMONS.

companion—a little brother or sister, will be remembered by them years and years after you have forgotten it ; that kindness however small, from an older and stronger boy, from an older and stronger brother or sister, to a younger and a weaker one, will be treasured up for years and years. Yes, years may part you asunder, but long afterwards, perhaps when you are quite old, you will find that some one presses your hand and looks gratefully into your face ; because he will remember that you befriended him when he and you were little boys together. Remember that with this grace and kindness to one another, your souls will be open to receive the grace of God also. Every morning and evening when you say your prayers, remember that it is a kind and gracious Friend who hears you. Into a hard heart that grace and favour cannot come, but into the gentle, merciful mind ; into the loving and generous heart, heavenly favours will come down like refreshing rain upon the grass ; like showers that water the earth. And the grace of childhood will be turned into the grace of manhood ; and the grace of manhood into the grace of age ; and all into the grace of God Most High. Just as this beautiful building, in which we are assembled, is made up of a number of small stones beautifully carved, every one of which makes up the grace and beauty of the whole, so too, all that is beautiful and good in the world is made up of the graces and goodness, not only of full grown men and full grown women, but of little children.

Remember, then, all you who are parents, more especially all you who are children—remember this day ; and if ever you are tempted to do wrong or to be idle, to be rude and careless, or to leave off saying your prayers, then think of your Saviour's good example which has been put before you this afternoon in Westminster Abbey. And may God bless you, and may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and be gracious unto you.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 8.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S,

(R. W. CHURCH, M.A.)

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1872.

"Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father."—Galatians iv, 1, 2.

St. Paul goes on to say that for us this time has come; that we are no longer servants but sons; "and if sons, heirs of God through Christ." But the race of mankind, according to this similitude, were once "children in bondage under the elements of the world;" children, having this world's knowledge only, wherewith to fill up and fashion the outline of their Creator, but who yet were made in the image of God, and could not help feeling His Divine kindred, and that they were born to something greater than sin, and pain, and death. But so it was. Mankind, made for immortality, had yet to wait in darkness and ignorance the time appointed of the Father. Then, when that time came, it was made manifest, what God meant man for. The seeming slave was indeed the free son, lord of all his Father's love; the child kept in ignorance of his Father's will, and made subject to tutors and governors, had come at last to be the responsible man with his eyes opened to

his fortunes and to his duties ; made known at last to his Father in heaven and brought near to Him ; entrusted with his own amazing future and inconceivable hopes. Since Christ was born, men have learned that they are indeed, what before they only dreamed of being, sons of God. They are dealt with no longer as servants who must obey ; as children who know not why they obey, but as grown men who know their fitness to learn the truth, and to rule themselves. They have been made acquainted with the mystery of God's counsels ; they have learned the unutterable wonders of the world to come, and the eternal weight of glory laid up in store for the sons of God. Since Christ was born, since that last great epiphany to the world of its true object, and of the real purposes of its Maker, this change has been. We are no longer children, differing nothing from servants in tutelage and bondage to the end of the world, knowing nothing but this world for the object of all our hopes and actions. We are now far beyond the wisest of the heathen ; we are in close relationship to God. We may approach Him with a more intelligent confidence, and a deeper affection than the most favoured of the Jews. Christ has made us sons of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. That is our lot and God's plan, as St. Paul teaches us, and we all know that he does not stint the magnificence and strength of his words, in describing how before all time, we were destined to the high estate of those whom God had taken for His children. But we also know, and no one recognizes it more than St. Paul, that there is another side to this. With the great change that has made known to us what our place and condition in God's family and kingdom are — that we are exalted ; endowed with gifts, holding the surest pledges of our endless life ; yet the outward contrast, still continues between what we believe that we are, and what we seem to be. We are still in the world ; we still have to live by faith and to wait in hope ; we still look forward to that which we have not yet, though we are sure that it is to be. We are still strangers and pilgrims on the road ; not in our true country or home, sons of God—our true character is not yet revealed. We know not yet what we shall be ; the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation, that we are sons of God. Made free from bondage, yet are we still longing and looking forward for that which comes not yet, "the glorious liberty of the children of

God." With our eyes open to know our Father in heaven ; to know the truth of what He is, and what we are ; yet still we know but in part, for we are weak, mistaken, short-sighted and short-lived creatures, and we can but behold it as in a glass, darkly, and not face to face. It is Scripture which calls us by anticipation, what we are indeed most truly in heart, but what we are not yet fully and completely. In this as in all things belonging to us, we have a double character. We belong in truth to both worlds. We are, and we are not, redeemed from mortality ; we are and we are not subject to the law ; we are and we are not citizens of heaven. St. Paul, calling himself the possessor of all things, yet declares himself, alluding of course to this life only, as " of all men the most miserable." He had indeed the certainty of all that Christ had promised to give him, but he had also, great Apostle as he was, to fulfil his preparation here ; to learn in the bitter school of Time, the lessons needed to fit even him for Immortality ; to accomplish the life of this present state which God appoints to all He calls into being. While that was going on he had to take its chances and its uncertainties, to submit to its limitation, its caprice, its humble and transitory duties, and at last to drink its bitter cup. So that, though we are still the sons of God, and though Christ is manifest to the world and the true light shines upon us, yet, as St. Paul describes, we are children in bondage under the elements of the world ; children unconscious of our real prospects ; heirs to an inheritance of which we know not the value ; holding on to promises of which we hardly know the meaning ; differing as yet nothing from servants, and kept under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by our Father.

This is the true story ; this describes our condition here. It is described as a state in which the circumstances of our life from the cradle to the grave, all the things we meet with in it, all the persons we have to do with, all the changes and chances in it, its sweets and its bitters, its brightness and its darkness, its sins, its errors, its temptations, its punishments and its losses, its defeats and its triumphs, its knowledge and its ignorance, its wisdom and its follies, are all but the conditions of this season of trial and preparation ; rudimentary lessons, practisings and rehearsals for that other life, yet to come. Great as is our destiny, great as is our calling, great as is our hope, yet, under

CHURCH SERMONS.

God's order, everything takes its time. Everything moves by degrees—often by slow degrees—from the imperfect to the complete, from the seed to the fruit. We are only being made ready for that which is one day to be so great. Now is the only time of learning to know our ignorance, and by discovering our own mistakes, to correct them and do better. Now all these “elements of the world,” as St. Paul says; these natural and customary circumstances of our few short years upon earth, are sent to us as our schoolmasters, I perhaps might say our watchers and guardians, to chasten, mould, shape, and to harden us. This, then, is the thought for the New Year. We have all heard over and over again that this life is a place of probation where we are tried, and made ready for the next. But my brethren, let me ask you in all seriousness to think and consider that, though this is trite and familiar, it is real and true. This life is a place of preparation; and that is in fact its real worth. That it is which gives it, its true and serious dignity to creatures who know they are destined for another. What is such a life as we know ours to be, compared with that boundless system in which it holds its place, unless, indeed, it is a necessary and most precious preparing time, for those who are called to immortality, to be fitted for immortality? Think what it is compared with the vastness of the Eternity before us and behind us; a mere point, a single tick of the clock in comparison with a man's life-time, is far longer, than all that life-time is to those vast ages which have gone before it, without beginning, and which are to come, without end. Think of it as compared with those immense spaces of the Universe which enclose us on all sides, and of which we see but a small portion, when we look up at the myriads of stars, growing fainter and fainter, as we gaze and remember that every one of them is a sun. Think, that when we look deeper and deeper into the endless blue, we are merely trying to look upward and onward towards distances, which imagination itself can neither sound nor measure. What are we, and our lives, in the midst of such an overwhelming universe? What are we, shut in between the immense Before and the Hereafter that shall never run out? What are we, closed in and lost between, what Pascal tells us he shuddered to think of, those immense wastes of space which shut in and encompass unknown worlds? What are we, before the Ancient of Days, to whose eternity, all time is as nothing; to whose

CHURCH SERMONS.

infinity the spaces of the sky that we behold are but the outskirts of His kingdom? Yet, there is an answer, and you may remember the saying of a great German thinker, that there were two things before which he was always lost in continual and increasing wonder, the starry heavens and moral law. That moral law in man which is his unique possession, amidst all the creatures with which he lives and dies; the law of conscience, duty, and love, in a poor frail creature that a breath of vapour may kill. This is the answer when the thought of the immensity of the things which exist without him, crushes him into insignificance; the answer which in fact the Psalmist, anticipating the Sage's reflection, gave many hundreds of years ago. "I will consider the heavens, even the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained. What is man that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that Thou visitest him." What indeed? But the Psalmist has already answered his own wondering exclamation. He whose name is excellent in all the world; He who has "set His glory above the heavens," "yet out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hath He ordained strength."

That is, He has made weak creatures like ourselves to know, in spite of all that we do not know, the great laws of right and wrong. He has given us a soul to see, and a will to choose, and a heart to love the goodness, the holiness which is in Himself. He has given us to love the truth and to hate falsehood; to fight His battles; to maintain His cause; to stand against and conquer evil. He has ordained this strength in us that He might "still the enemy and the avenger." "Babes and sucklings"—this was how men appeared to the Psalmist when he looked abroad on the sky, and then thought of men here. "Children still at school in the world" is St. Paul's expression that raises us out of this figure, and the dark figure of man's life and condition, is the consciousness and remembrance of the great end, for which we have to make ourselves ready, and of the great work of preparation which He has counted us worthy. For this preparation, this life was made; of this preparation the place in which we find ourselves living is the actual stage. And here comes to us another year. May God help us to redeem it from being thrown away upon what it was not meant for. It was not meant for sin; it was not meant for worldliness; it was not meant for selfishness. It was meant for great things,

although now to us they may seem but small ones. We all of us have our duties ; things which our conscience tells us are the right things ; the things we ought to do. We all of us have our temptations ; things which our conscience tells us are wrong things that we ought not to do ; things we ought to beware of. Whatever else we know, or do not know, these things we do know. We may well feel as children lost and wonder-stricken in this strange mysterious world, which is going so fast, and moving we know not whither. But our own duties, our own evils, our own follies, and our own mistakes, we do know something about. Here, among them is our trial. Here, among them is our preparation. To do the right we know ; to shun the sin we know ; this is what proves and moulds our hearts ; this is why we are living ; this is why God grants us another year of life.

My brethren, let us recognize in all earnest sincerity the time of honest and fruitful work, the day of grace when sin may yet be repented of, forgiven and left behind. And think not it is less trial and preparation for the everlasting heritage, because it is in small, and mean, and homely, and daily things. Remember the great sentence "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things ; I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Remember the conclusion of the great Apostle, a man if ever there was one, in strength of purpose and in act. A man, in the consciousness of his tremendous and eventful mission, yet feeling himself like but a little child in the midst of God's awful world of mystery and vastness, groping out his short space of life among things, which even he could not understand. "We know in part (he says) ; we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is past shall be done away with. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face. Now I know in part ; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

PREACHED AT EATON CHAPEL, EATON SQUARE,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1871.

"And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord, and the King.—1 Chron. xxix, 20.

The sympathy which has been manifested throughout this country during the last few weeks, with reference to the illness of the Heir-Apparent, affords a striking illustration of the real value of an hereditary monarchy; that is its moral, as distinguished from its political value.

Viewed politically, the question has many sides, and cannot be summarily disposed of in one way or the other. No one, with any breadth of view, will venture to say either that it is always the best form of government, or that it is never so. Everything depends upon the condition of the people, the amount of power which the monarch is to possess, and, we may add, the probable character and qualification of those who will fill the post. There are nations so unfit for self-government, that their only hope of prosperity lies in their being ruled with a strong hand; yet, even they may be cursed with a ruler so bad, that anarchy itself may be preferable to his intolerable tyranny. There are other nations to whom anything approaching to absolutism would be politically an unmixed evil; yet the exceptional virtue of the monarch who governed them (if we can imagine such a people being subject to an autocrat), might make them willing to bear the evil for a time, rather than encounter the dangers inseparable from a revolution.

If it be the duty of a Christian minister to suggest subjects

of gratitude and praise to the minds of his congregation, so that, as far as he can secure it, they may forget none of God's benefits, then it must indeed be in the highest degree appropriate to this place, that we should remind you of the inestimable blessing which has been bestowed upon us, even politically, in our wonderfully balanced constitution. We are not blind or obstinate enough, to maintain that it is susceptible of no improvement, or even that it needs no repairs. Everything in this world is capable of improvement, and everything in this world is always getting out of repair, more or less rapidly. We are subject to no foolish superstition about the infallible wisdom of our ancestors, or about the necessary excellence of everything English; we do not consider it a sufficient condemnation of any proposal to pronounce it "un-English;" we believe that it would be a great blessing to us to get rid of some things that are very English indeed, and take in exchange some things that are very un-English. But in spite of that, it would be the deepest ingratitude in us, not to thank God with all our hearts for our pre-eminent freedom from tyrannies of every kind, whether proceeding from a monarchy, an aristocracy, an oligarchy, or a democracy—from kings, lords, rings, or mobs. And does any one imagine, that this liberty would be increased, if either monarchy or aristocracy were abolished? Would the nation have one particle more power than it has at present, to do whatever it pleases without the bounds of its own dominion? Or is there one solitary individual who would have a better chance of improving his personal condition? Is there a man, woman, or child, whose energies are cramped, or whose prospects are blighted, by the overshadowing influence of dignities, the very highest of which, saving only royalty itself, may be attained by persons of the lowest birth? It is easy to see what we should lose by more elections, more party strife, more turmoil and bitterness, more temptation to jobbery and chicanery, and political strategy of every kind; but to tell us what we should gain by it, would puzzle the most ardent republican living.

This, however, is not the point that I wish to urge. I maintain, that if there *would* be a certain and considerable political gain from abolishing the monarchy, the moral loss would be incomparably greater. I maintain, that for the enormous moral blessing of an hereditary monarchy, so long and firmly established as our own, we have cause to bless the Lord God of

our Fathers, to bow down our heads, and worship the Lord and the King.

It can scarcely be necessary to say that the word "worship" is here used in that wide acceptation which embraces indefinite degrees of honour or respect. There is an honour which is due to every man, from the fact of his having been made in the image of God. There are various degrees of honour due to different men from the relative position which they hold. St. Peter tells us to "honour the king" in the same verse in which he tells us to "honour all men." So the wife is to "reverence her husband," and the husband is to "give honour unto his wife;" or, as it is expressed in our marriage service, to "worship" her; an expression, we may observe, that ought surely not to startle those who are constantly giving the title of "worshipful," that is deserving of worship or respect, to mayors and magistrates. It is only the highest kind of worship, Divine worship that we are forbidden to give to any creature whatever. The people of Israel expressed their respect for the king, and their reverence for God by the same outward act of bowing their heads; but the worship which was thereby offered to David was only a faint shadow of that which was rendered to Jehovah.

To return then to our subject. Wherein consists the moral value of an hereditary monarchy? I believe it consists in three things.

I. The first is, in their being one common object of reverence for the whole nation; some one that we can all look up to alike, and for the same reason—that reason being a purely voluntarily one. Let us endeavour to analyse this.

Every intelligent creature who does not habitually look up to his Creator, violates the first law of his being. The very fact of his having been created, makes it his first duty to worship the Creator. It might have been thought that this would be a sufficient lesson in humility; that the infinite distance between Creator and creature would have rendered it unnecessary to put any distance whatever between creature and creature, and that perfect equality would be found amongst those who are so perfectly equal in their fundamental condition. The fact is precisely the reverse. If there be one thing more than any other which God seems quite determined shall not exist in all creation, that thing is equality. It never has existed, within our knowledge, in this world or any other, and it is in the last degree improbable

that it ever will. There is no dead level in the universe. We are told that there are thrones, and dominions, and powers, amongst the angels in heaven, and those who fell could not help establishing something of the same kind amongst themselves. While as to man, he is placed in such a condition, that equality is simply impossible. Neither laws, nor money, nor anything else can make men equal. The difference between the several things which have to be done in order that society may exist at all, makes a difference which nothing can prevent between the men who have to do them. Unless everyone could do everything for himself—dig his own coal, build his own house, make his own clothes, cook his own food, and a thousand other things, there must be a great variety of occupations, and those occupations both require, and tend to produce, different kinds of men. Communism would not equalise them. If you paid a physician, a singer, a watchmaker, and a navigator, exactly the same salary or wages, you would not make them equal. Many men, no doubt, are scandalously underpaid; some, perhaps, may be scandalously overpaid; and it is a very laudable thing to endeavour, by all legitimate means, to remedy palpable abuses. But that does not alter the fact, that God has stamped inequality upon every square inch of creation—upon every sun, and every planet; upon every angel and every man; upon beasts of the field and every fowl of the air; upon every fish that swimmeth in the sea, and every reptile that creepeth upon the earth; upon every tree and every herb, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. Equality is the dream of man's littleness and ignorance, and all his levelling propensities are but the rebellion of his pride and self-will against God's universal law of rank and degree, of dependence and subordination.

“Order is heaven's first law; and that confessed,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,”

The highest of all intelligent creatures having enough to humble them, and the lowest to ennoble them, in their common relation to, and common dependence upon, the Creator of them all.

Now, if we have faith in Divine wisdom and love, we must, of course, believe that this arrangement is the very best that could have been desired to promote the welfare of creation at large. And, to pass over innumerable other aspects of the subject, with reference to individual families, relationships, and

communities of various kinds, it is surely not very difficult to see how a monarch is just what a nation wants in its national capacity, to enter into the spirit of this universal arrangement, and to share the benefit which all kinds and classes of intelligent creatures are meant to derive from it. We are all able to look up, singly and separately, perhaps to many persons, for one reason or another. But the nation wants some one to look up to, in its corporate capacity, with a common universal respect. And for that purpose there is nothing to compare with an hereditary monarch. Men cannot look up with the same feeling to one whom their own votes have raised to a certain position, however exalted. A Lord Mayor may excite the awe and admiration of the populace, and thereby do them real good; but those who elected him only smile with self-complacency on all the dignity that they have lent him for a twelvemonth. It is nothing to say that a monarchy must have been established originally, either by force or by free choice. The grand old tree, which was the great charm of the first exhibition, perhaps sprang from a seed dropped from a bird, or was planted as a sapling by the hand of a child. Who cared about its origin? Every one worshipped it as they worshipped nothing else in the whole building. For all those beautiful things had been made for the occasion; while the tree had been standing there from generation to generation. It had a majesty of its own as indisputable as the Queen's, and it gave a character to that exhibition which has been wanting in all succeeding ones.

Neither is it anything to me that, in a long line of kings, there will inevitably be some, for whose personal character it is impossible to feel the smallest respect. Everything human is imperfect. Every advantage has to be accepted with some drawback. And the thought of the extent to which the blessing to be derived from an hereditary monarchy, is increased or lessened by the character of the reigning sovereign should only fill us with gratitude to Almighty God for our own exceptional privileges, and make us the more earnest in prayer, for him over whose recovery we are all so heartily rejoicing.

Let me add further, that the advanced condition of our own nation, renders it peculiarly desirable that we should maintain an hereditary monarchy. The less we need a monarch politically, the more we require one morally. We are quite able to govern ourselves. True. And the very tendency to self-exaltation,

which is thereby produced, needs a corrective. We know that the Queen *will* give her sign-manual to any Bill which has passed both Houses of Parliament; but it is a very good thing for us, that it has to be asked. We know that the House of Commons can do ultimately whatever it really wants to do; but it is a very good thing that it cannot do whatever it likes off-hand by a stroke of its own pen. It is an exceedingly wholesome thing for itself, morally, that it should be called "The Lower House"—that if the other branches of the legislature have to look up to its power, it should have to look up to their dignity and authority.

And this reference to power suggests an objection that may be raised against the view we are presenting, drawn from the very limited amount of real power, that, in this country, is now left to the Crown; as if that very fact turned our homage into a mockery. Quite the reverse. It raises our homage to the very highest point, and immensely increases its moral value. What value is there in homage that is only rendered from fear or self-interest? Which is the more beautiful—the obedience rendered by a slave to the master who has power to flog him to death, or that rendered to an aged parent who has lost all power of enforcing obedience, and from whom his son has nothing either to hope or fear? Those who, whatever they may feel, have least opportunity of manifesting genuine loyalty, are the courtiers who depend upon royal favour for the social position they occupy. The purest and, therefore, most elevating loyalty is seen in the enthusiasm of the multitude, who can lose nothing by royal displeasure, and have not the faintest hope of ever gaining anything from royal favour. The people who nearly killed a Republican before the Mansion House for expressing regret that the Prince was still alive, were not Court officers, aristocrats, merchants, or bankers—they were plain men, who let themselves be unduly excited by a deep instinct of which they could, perhaps, have given no explanation. If the same remark had been made about a worthy alderman, they would probably have been satisfied with telling the offender what they thought of him. And yet every one of them knew perfectly well that he had an infinitely better chance of getting a personal favour from any civic dignitary than from the Heir Apparent. But he felt himself insulted in hearing one that he looked up to insulted. He felt that the Prince belonged to him, as the son

of his own Queen, and some day to be his own king ; he looked upon him as representing an heirloom that had been in the family for generations, and was highly prized for that very reason, because, if once lost it could never be replaced. Loyalty is a wonderful thing, no doubt ; but it is an instinct, and not a superstition.

II. The second advantage of an hereditary monarchy is that it supplies a common object of national sympathy and affection. We all have our separate friends, to whom we feel various degrees of attachment ; but the nation wants some one to love, and the last few weeks have shown what power a nation has to love. It is this which has excited the astonishment, and—to do them justice, let us add—the generously-expressed admiration of some of our continental neighbours. It is not that we give our royal family such handsome incomes and such exceptional dignities ; it is that we are so wonderfully fond of them, that we feel such an interest in all their personal concerns, that we rejoice with every one of them that rejoices, and weep with every one of them that weeps. British mothers spell through all the details of a royal christening and smile and cry, and talk about “the dear little thing” as if it was their own ; on the morning of a royal wedding, all the nation is in a flutter ; and at the prospect of an untimely death—why, we have seen what happens. The London correspondent of a French journal wrote, in the hour of our deepest anxiety, “This is the nation that was said to be turning republican. Come and see it now. Witness its grief, and be instructed.” In a leader, written at the same time, *La France* said :—

“Political life is suspended in England. One sole anxiety absorbs all minds—the health of the Prince of Wales. An entire nation, which is still impressed with strong convictions, turns to God and partakes of the grief which afflicts its Sovereign, whose son is, perhaps about to die. . . . What a spectacle and what a lesson ! The Prince of Wales is dying, and yet upon the other side of the Channel no one laughs, no one insults the high-placed personage struck down by sickness. The Princess of Wales quits the bedside of the dying man, not to seek necessary repose, but to hasten to the church to pray and to listen to prayers—and no one laughs. The Queen whom calumny sought to wound but the other day, kneels with her veil of widowhood beside the probable death-bed of her first-born

—and no one laughs. The Council—Messrs. Bruce, Gladstone, Forster, the Lord President, and Lord Chancellor, all whom England holds in highest esteem for talents, or position, or for age, which is also a dignity—address themselves to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and call upon him to prepare ‘new forms of prayer to appeal to the Almighty on behalf of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.’ And the people instead of mocking at this, rush to obtain copies of these prayers, and repeat them in their places of worship. Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, Jews, all implore the Deity to prolong the days of the future Sovereign of England. This people has the courage, the good sense, not to disown either its history, its past, its government, or its God, and yet it is a free people among all—who will dispute that? Such a spectacle affects us greatly. . . . Faith has never derogated from man’s dignity, it has never rendered him less desirous of liberty. Who would dare to say that England had abased itself because it partakes of the grief which afflicts the family that governs it, because it obeys its natural chiefs, who direct it to pray, as it would obey them if they called upon it to fight, and to sacrifice itself for the preservation of its old liberties.”

What a blessing for a nation to have its sympathies and affections thus universally drawn out, to be able to feel and manifest so pure and unselfish a love. Why, the moral gain that has accrued to us from our late anxiety, and grief, and thankful joy, is incalculable. We are better for it already; and the consciousness of it increases our confidence that God will answer our prayers and make *him* better for it also.

III. The last advantage to be mentioned is one that arises from both of the others, namely, the bond of union amongst ourselves, which is supplied by a common object of reverence and affection. Who does not know the marvellous power of agreement in uniting human hearts? What a priceless blessing, amidst our interminable janglings, that there is one note which, at any time, is sure to awaken an echo in almost every heart. Why, people can agree even about music when they want to give vent to their loyalty. There is only one tune that everybody likes, and that is the national anthem. Anything which excites this common loyalty, draws us closer together. The death of the Prince Consort did so; the danger of the Prince of Wales has done it still more—because our anxiety was strained

for a longer time, and there is the common joy succeeding the common grief. For weeks and weeks this whole nation has been incessantly watching around the same bedside ; every wife has felt the Princess's grief to be her own, and every mother the Queen's ; and now every man, woman, and child that deserves the name of Briton feels lighter and happier for thinking what a relief it must be to them. We are as united again as we were two months ago. And when the Prince has been in state, to St. Paul's Cathedral, to return public thanks for his recovery as his great grandfather did nearly a century ago, and when the people have had a good opportunity of shouting themselves hoarse with applause, we shall be more united still.

And for what are all these advantages to be sacrificed ? To save expense ! To save sixpence or eightpence a piece in taxation ! Not sixpence a head to you, honest labourer or artizan, but sixpence, on an average, to men of all ranks. Twopence perhaps, to you ; that is, if you have a moderate family dependent on you, say a shilling altogether. Extravagance, indeed ! Are the moral advantages of a monarchy such as ours worth less, than one-hundredth part of what we spend on strong drinks ? There is no necessity for lecturers to go about the country with their figures and statistics. If you want to save the whole expense of the British monarchy, you have only to fill your glass ninety-nine parts full instead of a hundred, and the thing is done. Or, if that is too severe self-denial to be expected from a free-born Briton, a few puffs less of tobacco would do it equally well. We forbear to ask how much is saved in the cost of revolutions, or what would be the price of anything that was substituted for a monarchy ; the whole question is so utterly contemptible that it would be a disgrace to us to entertain it for a moment, even if we had just concluded a disastrous war, and had to pay some hundred millions of indemnity to our conquerors.

To conclude. Some of you may, perhaps, be disappointed that I have not attempted to rest hereditary monarchy on the authority of Scripture. But there is no such authority to be found in Scripture. It teaches obedience to the powers that be, as ordained of God ; but it nowhere specifies any particular form of power as that which ought to be established everywhere. Monarchy was not a Divine institution amongst the Jews. On the contrary, they were rebuked for desiring a king. It is true

that their sin consisted, not in desiring a monarchial rather than any other form of human government, but in desiring a king of their own "when the Lord their God was their king." They sinned in despising the unique privilege of a Theocracy. So that no argument against monarchy can be drawn from the circumstance. Still, with such a fact before us it is hard to see how monarchy can be said to have come to us with direct recommendation from God. Scripture leaves all such questions entirely open, as we might be sure would be the case with a revelation that was intended for all sorts and conditions of men in every age and every clime. The Divine right of kings is a ridiculous fiction. No nation is under any obligation to establish a monarchy, or to perpetuate it after it has been established. All we maintain is, that when a nation is possessed of such an inestimable blessing, as a long-established constitutional monarchy like ours, it would be an act of the most suicidal folly, as well as of the deepest ingratitude to the Author of every good gift, to spurn it from them. Thank God for the threatening dispensation which has made us more resolved, if possible, than ever, to be guilty of no such madness, and to give ear to no one who would have us consider it an open question. We have differences enough, in all conscience; battles enough that must be fought out, chronic feuds that will never be settled. And do they think that we are going to throw our one point of agreement into the boiling cauldron—to give up our one centre of attraction, and trust for union—or disunion to "tickets" and "caucuses" and so forth? God forbid! Rather let us pray that we may prize more highly than ever the privilege which has been conferred upon us, and that the effect of this Providential voice upon those to whom it was more immediately addressed, may be to render our privilege more worthy of being prized. Let us pray that our English Court may ever be a model of all that is true and honest and just and pure, of all that is lovely and of good report; so that our children and our children's children may be able to bless the Lord God of their fathers, whenever, in national grief or in national joy, in national humiliation or in national thanksgiving, they bow down their heads and worship the Lord and the King.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 9.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. W. ROBINSON CLARK, M.A.,

Vicar of Taunton, and Prebendary of Wells.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1872.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory."—John ii, 11.

The manifestation of God in the flesh in this respect resembles the Divine Revelation throughout history: that it is gradual and progressive. Of this truth we have a striking illustration in the incidents recorded in the Gospels for the season through which we are now passing.

The first scene of all reveals to us a little child, born in weakness and in poverty, manifested to a lowly band of shepherds, "keeping watch over their flock by night." In the second it is the same little child, but now receiving the homage of Eastern Sages, who bring to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. There is a pause, and then we behold a boy twelve years of age, in the temple of Jerusalem, going about His heavenly Father's business; yet humbly submitting Himself to the authority of His human parents. There is a longer interval, and then begins, in deeper consciousness and in more powerful expression, the manifestation of the Son of God, in the baptism at Jordan, and the testimony by which it was accompanied; and again at the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, where He manifested forth His glory, and declared Himself Lord of the powers of nature.

The Church has chosen the narrative contained in the Gospel for this day, as a prominent and notable example of the

manifestation of the glory of Christ. She has appointed it to be read, first, at Evensong, on the Festival of the Epiphany, and again as the Gospel for the second Sunday after the Epiphany: in the first case, setting it side by side with the manifestation of Jesus in weakness to the Magi; and in the second case, making it a link in a closely wrought chain of Epiphanies, starting from Christmas-day, and passing onwards to the full display which He made of His power, of His grace and glory, in His public ministry. Like all the miracles of our blessed Lord, it is also a parable, only acted instead of spoken: and being the first of all, we may well believe that it holds a high place among them for meaning and suggestiveness, and that it must be calculated to supply many deep and pregnant lessons, to those who study it with earnest thoughtfulness and spiritual discernment.

The two points which I desire, by God's help, to bring more particularly before you this evening, are: First, the reality of the miracle; and Secondly, its significance!

First. *The reality of the miracle.* It was, as we have read, the first miracle of Christ: it was therefore necessary that it should be, beyond all question, a genuine one. And if ever a history was written which bore the stamp of reality this does. Better evidence of the historical reality of the New Testament miracles, as well as of their supernatural character could hardly be given than that which is found in the failure of the successive theories, which have been invented to discredit their truth.

First came the coarse infidelity, which charged the sacred historians with falsehood and their Master with imposture. But there are few now left—perhaps hardly one among those classes who may be supposed to be represented in this congregation—who will deliberately sanction a theory so repulsive; I say not to faith and reverence, but to reason and conscience.

A more dangerous assault has been made upon this and the other miracles of Christ, by those, who whilst they admit the substantial truth of the narrative, deny the supernatural character of the event recorded; and subsequently by the more thorough-going rationalism, which gets rid of the whole narrative as history, and ascribes to it a gradual origin and a mythical character. It is not possible, nor is it desirable that we should, on an occasion like the present, enter upon a minute examination of theories like these. They demand, however, some notice at our hands, not only because they have obtained wide currency, but because this particular miracle affords peculiar facilities for their application and confutation. And first we would remark, in the most general way, that the very fluctuations of unbelieving criticism, may properly and reasonably suggest a doubt of the truth of its fundamental principle. It has resolved that it will not believe in a miracle. This is its starting point; and

so, when it finds something which looks like credible testimony to miracles, wrought by One who was Himself a miracle, and whose whole life was miraculous, it sets to work to explain away the facts, or to deny the causes which produced them. But it has no sooner invented one theory, than that has to give way to another, and this again to a third, or else to the first, which for a time resumes its former place. Is not this the actual history of the assaults upon the miracles during the last hundred years? The naturalism of Paulus had hardly established itself, when it was rudely assailed by Strauss, who in the most complete and satisfactory way demonstrated its inward contradictions and absurdities. But the advocates of the mythical theory were more successful in the destruction of simple rationalism, than they were in retaining those adherents, who for a time joined their ranks.

Renan went to Palestine, a disciple of Strauss, but he could not traverse its length from Dan to Beersheba, he could not look upon Tabor, and Hermon, and Carmel; he could not survey Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, nor watch the sudden storm arise in the Sea of Galilee; and then turn to the pages of his New Testament, without confessing he was reading history. He returned, alas, with the poison of doubt still corrupting his blood; but he came back to tell of his belief in a *Jesus of history*, who lived, and taught, and worked, and died.

Let us turn, for one moment, from these general considerations, to the actual treatment of the narrative before us. Is it possible in any fair and reasonable way, to eliminate the supernatural element from the history, without attributing to the writer falsehood and imposture? There are those who think it is possible, and it is necessary that we should bestow some attention upon their statements.

We have already referred to the School, which professes to accept the general historical truth of the narrative, whilst they deny that any miracle was wrought, and account for that which took place, by referring to natural causes and instrumentalities. Can such an explanation be applied to St. John's account of the changing of the water into wine at Cana of Galilee? Does not the merest common sense revolt from the theory of those who profess to believe that Jesus had merely brought some wine with Him, as a wedding gift to the Bride and Bridegroom, and that He caused it to be mixed with the water which was in the jars? Is not such a theory absolutely resisted and set aside by all the recorded circumstances of the miracle? Circumstances so clear and precise that they have forced themselves upon the attention of every christian teacher, from the time of St. Chrysostom, down to our own days? Mark how every point of the story, seems to exclude any theory, to account for the charges except the supposition of miraculous power. It was water-pots that were used, and not

seasoned wine-casks which might have coloured and flavoured the water which was poured into them. They were filled up to the brim with water, so that no room was left for adding the supposed gift of Jesus; as though He would have presented His gift in that clumsy fashion! He commanded the attendants to draw out the contents out of the water-pots, so as to leave it beyond all doubt that the change brought about was miraculous; and it is distinctly stated by the historian that the water "was made wine," and that "the servants which drew the water knew" it. Certainly, if there be any historical truth in the statements—plain, clear, and simple—of this passage, they are the record of a miracle; and the supernatural element cannot be got rid of, unless by denying the truth of the facts recorded.

It can occasion no surprise to any thoughtful mind that explanations like these, although they might often be revived as scepticism grew desperate and knew not whither to turn for weapons, should be abandoned almost as soon as they were started.

We can only briefly refer to the mythical theory which so confidently took their place. According to this, there was no such historical fact as is here recorded. Nothing like it actually happened, or at least need have happened. It is simply a part of the legend which grew up around the person of this ideal Messiah. If the expected Deliverer had come, He must, of course, be like other great prophets, greater than any and all of them: He must work miracles, similar to those which had been worked by others. Moses turned water into blood; must not He turn water into wine?

In answering such a theory we might first refer to the objection, often and rightly urged, that the era and the circumstances of the alleged history of Christ are entirely incompatible with the notion suggested; that the period of time which intervened between His alleged appearance on earth and the origin of the records in which His history is contained—to whatever date they may be assigned—absolutely forbids the supposition of a mythological person and a fabulous life. On this point, however, we cannot now dwell, although it may be earnestly recommended to the consideration of all who may not already have given their attention to it. Let us rather for a moment consider the miracle before us, and ask how far the alleged fact will accommodate itself to a mythical explanation.

We allow that fabulous stories have been connected with the life and works of our Lord, that records of such fables may be traced back to times very early indeed, although, probably, much later than those of the Canonical Gospels. But we assert, what indeed no one will think of denying, that these stories differ by the whole width of heaven from the Evangelical narrative, and that a miracle like that which our Lord, is

recorded to have wrought in Cana of Galilee, is the last which would have been invented, or would have grown up in the minds of men.

Was this Gospel written by St. John? If it was there is an end to the question. If it was not, who wrote it? Some ingorant and superstitious Jewish Christian who revelled in the miraculous? Or, as others have suggested, an Alexandrian Christian of Gnostic tendencies? Try either supposition for a moment, and see how little it comports with the theory of a miracle invented or imagined. Turn to the Apocryphal Gospels, and in these you will meet with accounts of numerous prodigies which are said to have attended the infancy of Jesus. Miracles crowd upon miracles, just as might be expected in books which were the creation of credulity and superstition. Nothing can be imagined more unlike the miraculous incidents recorded in the true Gospels. In these we hear of no Infant Hercules strangling serpents in his cradle, of no wonderful boyhood surrounded with prodigies. Only once are we permitted to see Him in the days of youth; and then it is simply as a boy, twelve years old, zealously going about His "Father's business." We may confidently assert, when we consider the character of the fabulous Gospels, that a false Gospel of St. John, written by an impostor or an enthusiast, would have given a very different account of the beginning of the ministry of Christ, would have invented or imagined a very different kind of miracle to inaugurate it.

But we venture to think that the miracle cannot, with any greater show of reason, be explained away on the other supposition, that the Gospel was the work of an Alexandrian Christian of the second century. Is this the kind of miracle which would have grown up in the intellectual atmosphere of Alexandria? Is this the sign of power which would have commended itself to the imagination of a Gnostic? To ask such a question is indeed to answer it. There is, in fact no reasonable view of the narrative before us, but that which recognises it as the genuine production of the beloved Disciple, relating simply and truthfully the facts as they came within his own knowledge. Regarding the question as a mere matter of historical criticism, we maintain that the miracle, as it stands, resists every attempt to take away its supernatural character, or to deny its reality as a fact. That Jesus did this beginning of miracles at Cana of Galilee we cannot doubt. The reality of the miracle, then, we consider as certain; but this is not all. What shall we say of its character and meaning. * Was it a miracle worthy of Him?—Worthy to be the first in that glorious series of words and deeds of which His public ministry was composed? In answering this question, we come to the second part of our subject.

II. *To consider the significance of the miracle.* It is

when we approach this side of the subject, that we become impressed with the marvellous suitableness of this miracle, as the first great public act of power with which the ministry of our Lord was inaugurated. A mere glance at it reveals but little of all its wondrous depth and width of meaning. In its occasion, in its circumstances, in its details, as well as in its inner significance, it teems with instruction. Each of those many lessons which spring up wherever we touch it, might well be chosen as the subject of a sermon. Thus, we might remark our blessed Lord's condescension, in entering into the ordinary relations and enjoyments of social and domestic life; or we might learn from this miracle how He sanctions and consecrates the marriage state; or we might see in it an illustration of the difference between the severe and ascetic ministry of St. John the Baptist and the more genial ministry of Christ; or we might notice the profuse generosity and liberality with which our blessed Lord supplies the wants of men; or again, we might dwell upon that beautiful lesson, so often connected with this miracle, and so apparent on its surface, that whilst the world gives its best things first, and afterwards its worst, never performing its promises, our Lord keeps His best things for last, always giving far more than He had promised. Any one, or more, of these truths might suitably and profitably occupy our attention this evening. We will however restrict ourselves, at present, to that which is perhaps the most central thought of the whole miracle. It is a lesson not new, probably, to any of us, and yet which is ever fresh. In this miracle we see our Lord not merely turning the poor element of water into the rich and generous wine; we see Him also, in a figure, taking the poor element of human nature and human life, and endowing it with new, and higher, and richer qualities and powers. It is, as we have said, the central thought of this miracle. It is also the central thought of the saving work of Christ. He came not to destroy nature, but to transfigure it; to raise what was low in us, to refine what was earthly and gross, to strengthen what was weak, to enrich what was poor.

It may appear that the analogy in this case is incomplete, that human nature is richer than water on the one hand, and less pure on the other. In regard, however, to the point of comparison, the poverty of water as contrasted with the richness of wine, the analogy is fair and it is striking; nor even in detail is it inapplicable. Those who think most of the greatness of Humanity will hardly deny its weakness and meanness. Those who take the lowest view of man's nature can scarcely overlook its inherent greatness and nobility. Man is fallen and lost. His pristine glory is dimmed. The beauty of the Divine image is disfigured and defaced, and yet there is a lingering glory which tells of his heavenly Original; he still bears traces of the

likeness of the Most High. The image is thrown down from the lofty pedestal on which it formerly stood. It is battered, bruised, defaced, broken; but yet it is the image of a God, and not of a devil or a beast. Humanity is a *lost* child, but he *is* a child and not a mere run-away-slave, and he is the lost child of God.

Do we mean, then, to countenance those shallow and ill-considered theories, which deny that man is fallen and weak, which speak as though he needed nothing but the development of his own resources? It does not require the plain, unwavering testimony of Holy Scripture to disprove the truth of fallacies so transparent as these. The sad record of human history; which is more than anything else the record of human sin followed by chastisement, of human weakness followed by failure, may surely satisfy the most sceptical.

The words of the blessed Virgin, at the marriage of Cana, are the symbol of the confession which arises, sometimes in clear, articulate accents, sometimes in groanings which cannot be uttered, from the heart and conscience of mankind. "They have no wine." "We were yet without strength," says St. Paul. "Yet without strength." We had thought we were not without it—at least, that it was not entirely beyond our reach—that by some means, through some effort of our own, by some happy accident in the unfolding history of our nation, our race, of the world, we might rise to the firm possession of a power which continually slipped from our hands, to an independence of which we had often vainly dreamt, but which had ever proved an unreality. Visions of power and greatness, and dignity, and glory, had arisen before the eyes of man. Mighty empires arose, populous nations bowed before the throne of one sovereign will. The purple and fine linen of wealth and luxury told of multitudes ready to do their bidding; but weakness and vanity were over all. The moth fed on man's richest robes, the rust corrupted his strongest sceptre, the thieves broke in and stole his gold and precious stones. The dry rot was in the thrones of proudest Kings. Man was proved over and over again to be the weak water of earth, and not the rich wine of heaven, and ever and anon he was made to know and feel it, and there arose from his aching heart the sorrowful, despairing cry, "They have no wine."

Not at once did the love of God respond to the wants of men. His time was not yet come, when the first and many repeated appeals arose from the weary sin-sick earth to the Throne of Heaven. Man must be taught to feel his weakness and helplessness, more and more, and to long with ever increasing desire for the Hope of Israel, for the Deliverer of men.

At last the hour of deliverance arrived, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."

It is the mighty work which was represented in His first miracle at Cana. He did not despise man's nature, any more than He refused the water at Cana. He took it, and raised it, and transfigured it. Just as in the first Creation, the Maker of all things took the clay of the ground and fashioned it in the likeness of man, so did the author of our redemption take the fallen nature of humanity and sanctify it, that it might be conformed to His own likeness. Out of clay He made man. Out of men He made saints.

See how He first accomplished it, and so gave the pledge and earnest of its final realization, in His own Incarnation, in His own person and life. When He took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the virgin's womb. He took upon Him the very nature of man, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. It was our own nature, and not the nature of angels, that He assumed. But how changed was that nature in Him! Dwelt in by the Eternal Word, anointed by the unction of the Holy Ghost given unto Him without measure. He stood forth before the eyes of the world without spot or stain of evil; holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Unsullied purity; deepest and most unfeigned humility; such truth, and goodness, and love, as had never even been imagined; such depth of self sacrifice as man could not naturally believe in—these were the leading features in that Holy Life; in that glorious example. He was man, and yet He was more than man: It was the water of earth, only purer and more refreshing; but it was also the rich wine of the Kingdom of God.

And that which was thus accomplished for humanity in the person of our Lord, has also in its measure been done by Him in the members of His mystical body. The saintly life is a creation of Christ, a transfiguration of the natural life of man. It has never, it is true, been more than an imperfect reflection of the glorious life of the King of Saints, but this at least it has been—like it in character, if inferior to it in degree: a life altogether different from the life of nature, a character far removed from the character of the child of this world. The world has often refused to believe in the existence of the life of grace, and sometimes with reason; but not often with entire reason. The Church is only the moon which reflects but coldly the bright beams of the glorious sun, from which she derives all her light; but there is a darkness so gross and so wilful that it will see no light however pure and brilliant. If the world were as willing to discern the Spirit of Christ in the lives of His servants, as it is to exult in their inconsistencies, it need not remain ignorant of the presence of that heavenly grace which has converted sinners into saints, and out of the low and selfish life of man has brought forth the fruits of faith and love and devotion.

Nor does this recreative power of our Lord extend only to the character of human life in general, and to its fundamental principle, but to all its details. He enters into the joys and sorrows, into the mean and petty trials and troubles of the life of man, and makes them the ministers of salvation, the agents of the best and purest blessings to mankind. He takes the things which seem lowest and meanest, and stamps them with a high and heavenly character. Earthly relations, earthly necessities and occupations are no longer mere incidents in the life of Time, they belong to the life of Eternity. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God.

This work of the redemption, the regeneration, the transfiguration of humanity is the work of Jesus Christ, and of Him alone. He alone could do it, and He does it altogether. Yet we must observe, and it is one of the lessons which are forced upon us by this miracle, that here, as elsewhere, Almighty God, in thus transforming the nature of man, makes use of means. When our Blessed Lord fed the five thousand who were fainting in the wilderness, He made use of the small stock of loaves and fishes, which were found in the possession of His companions, and of the instrumentality of His Apostles in distributing them. When He would supply the need of the wedding guests at Cana, He told them to fill the water-pots with water, and He employed this element of water as the basis of the rich and generous wine which He provided for the feast. And so it is always. He is the Author of the new Creation; but He does not neglect or overlook the materials which are ready to His hand.

He is ready and willing to make us the living and vigorous members of His mystical body. He longs to see us filled with all the graces of His Spirit; but He will not raise us to the highest blessings of His Kingdom independently of our own consent, or of our own efforts. Alas! my brethren, we are here touching upon the saddest aspect of the subject which is now before us. The thoughts which are suggested by the narrative of this day's Gospel, are thoughts of joy and gladness and deepest consolation. That man may be raised and purified, and made noble and even divine—this is a hope which may well fill us with joy and peace in believing. Yet these words (if they convey to us any real meaning) must also cover many of us with shame and confusion, because we are not partakers of this heavenly gift. To think that we are Christians—in name and profession—men and women who have received the Divine power of His truth, of His Spirit, of His Life; and that, nevertheless, we are not Christlike—this is a thought which may well cause us to beat upon our breasts, and to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And the reason must be sought in ourselves and not in Christ. He is ever waiting to be gracious, ready to speak the word of power which turns in us the water

into wine, but, in order that He may perform this miracle of grace, we must truly turn to Him. We must, as St. Bernard says, bring to Him the water of penitence, and He will turn it into the wine of love. Or, if that be too much to ask or to expect of us, we must at least bring to Him the stony hearts, the pitchers which seem as though they could hold no water; and He will touch the rock with the wand of His love, and waters of sorrow and penitence will flow out of it; and He will touch it again, and the water of sorrow will turn into the wine of joy, and the streams of penitence will be transmuted into the rivers of love. Through faith in His word and work, through obedience to His will, He will by the Spirit of His grace, raise and ennoble, and dignify, and glorify that nature which had fallen from God, and will adorn it with more than its pristine glory.

One word more. There is another application of this glorious thought. There is another sphere in which the power of Christ will be shown in transmuting and transfiguring the life of earth into the life of heaven. It is not man alone who shall know His mighty power. The day is coming when he shall be changed, in body, soul, and spirit, into the likeness of the Son of God: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." But that is not all. The Creation—that whole Creation which groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "We," says St. Peter, "according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." As the Creation has shared in the fall and degradation of man, so it shall also share in his rise and restitution. The briars and thorns which were the witnesses of the curse shall pass away. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;" and "there shall be no more curse." Ages may pass away before these glorious hopes are finally realized—generation may succeed generation—empires may rise and fall—but when the fullness of the time shall have come, when the purposes of God shall be fulfilled, when He who sits upon the throne shall send forth His voice, "Behold I make all things new," then "sorrow and sighing shall flee away," and we shall hear only "thanksgiving and the voice of melody," then shall redeemed Humanity stand upon the redeemed earth, and walk in the light of God's countenance, and be satisfied with His likeness; then shall the nations of the saved, who are brought into the heavenly Jerusalem, confess and give thanks to Christ their King: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. RICHARD GLOVER, M.A.,

Vicar of St. Lukes, West Holloway.

PREACHED IN THAT CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNING,
DÉCEMBER 17th, 1871.

(A Sermon on the Illness and Recovery of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.)

Peter, therefore, was kept in prison : but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."—Acts xii, 5.

It would, I think, be very unwise and very un-sympathetic for the pulpit to be silent to-day on that great national subject which is now engrossing the minds and hearts of all classes, from the highest to the lowest in the whole British empire. And it would be a very culpable neglect, in a Christian minister, to miss so great an opportunity of impressing upon his hearers, again and again, those manifold Christian lessons which the wonder-working providence of God has lately been illustrating and confirming. God has lately been dealing with this country in a marvellously exceptional manner; and wilfully blind, indeed, must be he, who has failed to see the finger of God in the various and changeful events on which the nation's eyes—nay the eyes of the whole world—have lately been so anxiously fixed. For some time past there have been heard in certain quarters, the low harsh murmurs of discontent with existing institutions, which certain restless demagogues have stirred up, and which certain seekers after popular applause have basely taken advantage of—that have created fears in many quarters for the ultimate safety of the throne itself. And what did our wonder-working God do, in order to rebuke these endeavours, and to show the groundlessness of these fears? What did he *do* in order to manifest the loyalty to the throne that existed deep down in the national heart, and in order to deepen and intensify it a thousand fold, so that it might put to shame those infidel and demagogic schemes that have lately brought ruin upon society in other lands and which threaten this? He just did that, which, as the event has proved was the thing of all others best fitted to do it; He struck the royal home with a profound affliction; and laid low the Queen's eldest son, and England's hope and heir, with a sickness that seemed more than likely to prove a sickness unto death. *What* was the sickness with which He visited him? The very same that his princely father died of ten years ago; thus calling the special attention of the nation to the memory of that father, and remind-

CHURCH SERMONS.

ing it that he was Albert the Good; and that the throne which it was sought to overthrow, was the purest and the most influential for good that England was ever blessed with: and reminding it thereby, at the same time, that She, who now filled it, was a lonely widow, who looked to her people to be to her instead of husband and friend. *When* did it please God to visit him with this apparently fatal sickness? Just at the very same period of the year, to the very day, on which that good father sickened. Thus, bringing to the royal sufferer's own mind, in a way most likely to impress and benefit him, that good father's death and all the circumstances connected with it, and the blessed character by which that exemplary father won the esteem of all the good and true. And thus he summoned all men to look on and learn some most impressive and salutary lessons; and to teach them, that even princes could not resist his chastening hand, or stay his dreadful summons—and the necessity that there is for all, and even princes, or especially princes, so to live that they may be ready to die. And what was *the effect* of this mighty sorrow in the royal home? What, but to make the whole empire one mourning, anxious, sympathetic family; to fill every heart from the highest to the lowest, with a most purifying sorrow; to teach hearts and lips to pray that hardly ever pray at any other time: to gather all the population, as it were, around that dying bed at Sandringham, that so they might be forced to meditate awhile on the solemnities of life and death; to teach them the impotency of mere human aid—however anxious and skilful—and to convince them that if that precious life was to be preserved; it could only be by God's own gracious delivering power and mercy—and thus to lead them to look, in despair of other aid, entirely to Him. And this was done in an unprecedented manner. Men, as I have said, prayed for this young prince, who hardly ever pray for anything else. And as for the Church of God, especially that part of it to which we belong, it flew as one man to God. Prayer was ordered and offered in every parish church in the land; and with a simple and beautiful piety the royal sufferer's wife left his dying bed that she might join with the humblest subject in supplication to God, her only hope in the needful time of trouble. And of the church in its largest sense, including all denominations, we may truly say, in the words of my text, "prayer was made without ceasing by the church of God for him." We know—blessed be God—the marvellous and totally unexpected change that has taken place; and which makes us all so bright and happy and full of hope to-day.

Let us then, turn now awhile to the Word of God and see whether this has been mere chance or not, or whether there has been any connection between these two things—between the

marvellous event on the one hand, and the church's mighty prayers on the other. Now the history before us, will help us to decide this question; for this is the inspired Word of God, and it was written especially to guide us to the truth respecting all such mysterious phenomena. Our text presents three things for consideration, first, a case of hopeless peril; second, faith and prayer contending against it to the last; third, faith and prayer winning a mighty deliverance out of it; peril, prayer and prevalency.

I. We fasten your attention then first on the extraordinary peril of the man to whom the text alludes. That man was Peter, the Lord's own apostle. He was now the intended victim of the cruel Herod Agrippa. That wretchedly time-serving and thorough man of the world, had now political reasons for winning the favour of the Jews; and he thought he could not accomplish this better than at the expense of the Christians. Accordingly, for no alleged crime or offence—save for that of being a Christian—he hesitated not to “kill James the brother of John with the sword” one of our Lord's three most favoured apostles. “And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also, and accordingly put him in prison, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people”—that is, to makesport for them by a cruel death in the amphitheatre. And so determined was Herod to carry out this politic purpose that he took every possible precaution against his escape. He was put into a strong inner prison cell. He was guarded by day and by night by sixteen soldiers; and, which was very unusual, he was bound by two chains to two soldiers both by night and day, so that his slightest movement should awake them if they fell asleep. If ever a man then, seemed doomed to a certain death, Peter was. Escape seemed utterly hopeless. And the fact that Herod had actually slain James, which was a mere tentative scheme for obtaining popularity, made it appear even more hopeless still. It was in fact just such a case as that of Israel at the Red Sea, hemmed in on every side, with the army of Pharaoh behind them, and the Red Sea before them, and the mountains around them. Or like that of Daniel or the three children in the very midst of the burning fiery furnace. Or like Jonah in the depths of the sea. It was a case to make all worldly men shake their heads and say; “Ah, it's all over with him now. Nothing can be done. We must leave him to his sad fate and make the best of it; prayer in this case is now utterly useless and absurd, especially as the very last night of his imprisonment has arrived, and in the morning he dies.” And even faith would have said—unless it had been very strong—“Ah, it is useless to pray now, we may give it up and submit. We might have had hope in prayer a few weeks ago, but God has not interfered these many weeks, and it is not likely He wi'll

now." Such was the extremity of the Apostle's peril. And in regard to it we may say, See how far the Lord may often allow matters to proceed before he interferes even when he intends to do so. This was the case in all those instances I have referred to; and in numberless others that record his most striking displays of delivering power. He seems often to allow the bow to be strained up to the very point of breaking. He seems to allow his people not only to go to the very edge of the fatal precipice, but to hang partly over it, so that friends hide their eyes from beholding the plunge down which they think has begun, and even *then* he means to save. And what is the lesson from this? It says to Christians "Do not be surprised if the Lord allows you to be brought into the most apparently hopeless extremities; and if you are, do not despair even then. I do not think Peter himself despaired even on this eve of his execution. I find him calmly, and even soundly sleeping on this night, ready for death or life; but expecting, as I think, deliverance even yet, because the Lord Jesus himself had told him that he should not die till he was old. "When thou art old thou shalt stretch forth thine hand and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not; thus spake He signifying what death he should die:" namely, by crucifixion at a later day than this could be. Any way he trusted his Lord even now—even in extremities. He did not give up prayer or hope; no more did the Church. The motto of faith is "Nil desperandum" even "in extremis."

II. And this brings me to notice, next, the effect of this extreme peril of the apostle upon the church of God. It did not, as we have seen, lead to despair, but it led to prayer and to more prayer. "Prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him." His pitiable and dreadful case excited universal sympathy and concern in the Church not only for his own sake but for the sake of the church, and for the sake of the cause of God. Peter's life just now seemed of the utmost importance to it. Already had they lost one of the loved number of their three chief leaders. James was killed. What should they do if Peter were taken too? How, then, would the faith and courage of the whole church be tried! And how would the enemies of the church be stimulated and encouraged! Therefore, for a life so precious to the church at this conjuncture, they would pray to Him "with whom all things were possible." And they formed prayer meetings in every place, so that God was besought on all hands by the people he loved, and in all ways; in their private prayers; in their family prayers; and in their public prayers, for this one thing. Now this in itself was a ground of hope. Prayer is always a strong thing, but united prayer is very strong, and a whole church's prayers would seem to be

almost irresistible, especially when all were asking for the same thing. And when it was seen that a lengthened opportunity was given for such prayers to be offered, and that they grew more and more fervent as the case seemed to grow more hopeless, *that* looked to faith's eye, very much as though God intended yet to step in. For, as it has been well remarked; "It is so difficult for God as a Father, to pain his children by refusing such prayers when offered to him, that he seems often to exclude the opportunity of being asked for that which he does not mean to grant; while on the other hand it is so agreeable to him to grant their requests, that he often provides the opportunity for being asked for that which he deigns to bestow. Both considerations seem to have operated here. James seems to have been taken away somewhat suddenly (as poor Prince Albert was) before the church could offer its prayers on his behalf; while the doom of Peter was postponed, that prayer might be offered for him."* And thus I always had hope in regard to our Prince, even when the papers regarded him as all but dead, even when I saw in a telegram "No hope; the Prince is fast sinking;" because it seemed to me such a wonderful and hopeful sign that so much prayer was allowed to be offered for him. Not, indeed, that we can always read aright the ways and wonders of God's providence. God might have allowed such prayer to be offered and still have taken him, and even then the prayer might have had a real answer; and the event might have been over-ruled for good. And even now, we must not too confidently reckon that the Prince will finally recover, because such a wonderful and unexpected improvement has taken place. Nor would we dare to doubt that prayer was availing, and that God hears it, even if he were now after all to die. But still, I say, when I saw so much prayer to God stirred up for this one thing, I felt that the nation would yet be astonished by what God would do. Prince Albert had died of this same fever; Lord Chesterfield had died of it; and since then the Prince's own groom has died of it. But then they had not been the subjects of such united and fervent prayer. But this young Prince had. And oh! wonderful coincidence, and oh singular mercy of God!—on the very anniversary of his father's death, the day most dreaded of all, and the day when there was actually most danger—on that very day "the fever left him and he began to amend." But whatever we may think of the connection between this event and prayer, there can be no doubt whatever in the case of Peter, for the Word of God here plainly points out that prayer was *the cause*—the instrumental cause—of that which follows as the effect. "Prayer was made by the Church

*Kitto's Daily Bible Illustrations.

unto God for him without ceasing" up to the very night of morning of his execution; and he was not executed after all; because prayer had accomplished his deliverance.

III. And now a concluding word or two upon that wonderful deliverance. Now, you observe, it occurs not until the latest moment—but on the very night on which he is to be brought forth—God sends down his angel to knock off his fetters and to set him free. How true it is that God can afford to wait. Just in time enough to save him, God steps in by his angel—leads him by His miraculous hand safely out into the free street—and then vanishes again, and leaves him to his own and to human care. I have not time to read the graphic story but how marvellous the deliverance; how clearly the hand of God alone; how certainly and declaredly an answer to prayer! And that this might be all the more clear, Peter is restored to the church *while*, far into the deep night, they were actually engaged in prayer on his behalf. Peter makes his first appearance "where many were gathered together praying" and they rise from their knees to hear from his own lips "how the Lord had brought him out of prison." Thus is this miraculous deliverance directly attributed to prayer; and God would thus teach us its mighty and superhuman power. And where is the sceptic, so hard and blind, nay, I will dare to say, so weak in intellect, or morally perverse in heart, as will not see the working of the same God in our late national affairs, and the same merciful power in the restoration (at least so far) of our Prince? O! these things are very consoling to the Christian, and very confirmatory of his faith. They tell him that God is still the Living God; that prayer goes up to heaven now, and comes down in power now, in the midst of all the bustle and high civilization of the nineteenth, as in the ruder first century, and that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And may the effect be to lead us to believe in God more; and to believe in prayer more; and by the one to seek the other, while time and health are granted to us. O! God's late dealings ought indeed to deepen and increase the national piety and to make us all, from Queen to peasant, his more faithful servants. Let us hope, and still pray, that this may especially be the effect on the subject of this mercy himself; that he may never forget God's mercy and goodness to him, but feel constrained to devote himself with his magnificent possibilities of honouring Him, to the glory of his Helper and Redeemer. And if this should be the result of this afflictive dispensation—to make Albert Edward a pious and God-fearing monarch—then we shall have still further occasion to adore God's goodness and mercy; and both prince and people may then indeed say—"It is good for us that we have been afflicted."

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 10.]

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. G. H. WILKINSON, M.A.,

Incumbent of St. Peter's, Eaton Square.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON.

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 1872.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."—2 Corinthians v. 14.

The manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ as resulting in the conversion of St. Paul,—this, I think is the subject which is naturally suggested to our minds as we pass from the services of Epiphany to the collect and lessons for Thursday next.

It was indeed a strange scene, that turning point in the life of Saul of Tarsus, when (as he expresses it) he ceased to confer with flesh and blood, because it had pleased God to reveal His Son to him.

Saul of Tarsus had started from Jerusalem, determined to stamp out that accursed sect of the Nazarines. He was furnished with letters from the authorities of the land, and he had determined to go to the northern extremity of the country, and to bring back to Jerusalem every man and woman who acknowledged Jesus Christ. His thirst for blood was not satisfied with the few drops that fell from the first martyr, St. Stephen. Everywhere, throughout the length and breadth of the land, he must go to gather new victims to be sacrificed upon the altars of Judaism. Now he is speeding onwards; and very soon he will have drawn near to those gardens by which the old city of Damascus was surrounded. Far above him there is towering into the clear blue vault of heaven, the snow-capped height of

Hermon. Dry is the desert sand upon which he is journeying, but drier far is the heart of that persecuting Pharisee. Pure and spotless to the eye of man, but in the sight of God icy cold, as that height of Hermon, is the life of Him who has been proud of being known as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," and a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

And now, all is still around. It is the silent hour of noon; when, in those Eastern lands, the whole being is depressed with an unutterable sense of exhaustion. All is still around; and then suddenly, and brighter far than the brightness of that meridian sun, a light shines around the band of travellers. A voice, distinct and articulate, reaches to the heart of Saul of Tarsus. "Who art thou, Lord?" is the cry of the awakened conscience. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." It was hard for Saul of Tarsus; it is hard for every man who is now fighting against his God. It is hard for *thee*, my brother, to fight against that God who is pleading with thee.

Half dazed, he is bidden to arise. He is blind! He is led by the hand into Damascus. Three days are spent in solemn penitence. For three days he gropes in the dark, seeking for the message of pardon and of peace. At last, the light breaks; at last, the message of love is given; he is baptized, and his sins are washed away. Through the streets of Damascus and into that upper room where the disciples are assembled, the strange tidings are borne, that the man who had come from Jerusalem to destroy the Christians, is now bearing witness for Christ; is turned into the fervent and believing apostle.

It was a great conversion; great, whether you look at it in relation to God, in its relation to the world, or in its relation to the individual.

(1.) It was a wonderful showing forth of the Omnipotence of God. Nothing, humanly speaking, was more unlikely, than that this man of perfect outward life, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, should sacrifice everything for the new sect of Nazarenes. Nothing was less likely, than that this man, wrapt up in self-righteousness, proud of his birth, proud of his family, proud of his education, proud of his religious reputation—nothing, I say, humanly speaking, was more unlikely, that that such a man should be converted. Publicans and sinners might be imagined as trying for admission into the brotherhood of peace, and life, and love; but Saul of Tarsus? Never! Never would any one have thought or dreamed of such an event as that.

My brethren, when we begin our ministry, we are often afraid of trusting the Word of God; afraid of trusting the Holy Ghost; we feel as though we must fall back on secondary motives, good

in themselves, but utterly powerless to affect the highest part of man's being. We are frightened to use the Gospel that has been entrusted to us. We feel as though another gospel—another teaching—were necessary for the learned, the educated, the refined. But when the shyness of youth passes into the knowledge of riper years, we find that God is greater than man, and that God is wiser than man. We learn, then, that God is Almighty; that the Holy Ghost is the Giver of Life, to the rich as well as to the poor; to the intellectual as well as to the ignorant; to the young as well as to the old. We learn too, that although as a general rule God works in an ordinary way,—that although, as a general rule,—man reaps that which he sows, still, that God is pleased to keep (if I may so express myself) a reserve of supernatural force;—that God is able to bring a higher law, as yet unknown to us, to bear upon those lower laws with which we are familiar, and so to modify them, that supernatural results are accomplished. “Who art thou, O great mountain? Before God thou shalt be laid low.” Thus saith the Lord: “My Word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” God's words, the words of the incarnate God, are “spirit;” not merely spiritual, but *spirit*; impregnated, as it were, with a Divine electricity that strikes at once into the highest part of man's being—his immortal spirit. Christ's word was spoken; and Christ's word went direct to the heart of Saul of Tarsus. He was laid low by that word, and converted. “The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

(2.) It was a great conversion also, when you look at it in relation to the *world*. It may be that now the whole future of England is hanging upon the conversion of one man. Most certainly, 1800 years ago, the conversion of the world, humanly speaking, was hanging upon the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The individual life has a power wrapped up in it, which no one is able to calculate. One man converted in this church to-night, might affect for ever the destinies of London. That man who entered Athens to be greeted with the taunt: “What will this babblers say?”—that man who went into Imperial Rome bound to a Roman soldier, so depressed, that when he met the few people who believed in Christ Jesus, he thanked God and took courage;—that one man, so weak, so powerless as he then felt, was used by God to silence the oracles of Greece, to lay low the temples of heathendom, to speak words that have rung home into human hearts, and moulded the thoughts and influenced the characters of men for 1800 years. The words of St. Paul went into the heart of Luther; they went into the heart of Wesley; they have gone into the heart of every man who is turning the world upside down by the power of the Holy Ghost. And the spirit of

St. Paul, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit that prompts a man to die, if need be, for a crucified Saviour,—that spirit has lived on. He, being dead, yet speaks. His spirit entered into Henry Martin when he parted with all that man holds dear; it entered into the hearts of Bishop Mackenzie and of Bishop Patteson; it has nerved men to die, singing glory to God; it has inspired the whole army of martyrs, and the noble company of confessors, in every age and in every land. Such was the importance of St. Paul's conversion to the world; such may be the importance of even one weak man yielding this night to the power of God the Holy Ghost.

(3.) This was a great conversion also, if you look at it in relation to the *individual apostle*. His was a great sacrifice, nobly made. We talk about our "giving up" for Christ, a little money, or a little pleasure; a little of that body which will so soon crumble into dust; a little of that world from which we may be parted *to-night*,—for this night God may say to any one of us, "Thy soul is required of thee." We talk of what we give up for Christ! Have you ever thought what the Apostle Paul sacrificed? He possessed everything that man desires to possess in this world. He had birth; he had money; he had talents; he had education; he had a great reputation. He was fitted in every way, even in the judgment of those who do not believe in Christ, to occupy the highest position in the national assembly. Of all that, he made a voluntary wreck! He tossed it all behind him; he became a follower of that sect which was everywhere spoken against; he was stigmatized as a hypocrite,—laughed at—as *you* will be laughed at if you are true to your highest convictions; ridiculed and scorned as a mad fanatic; as Paul the traitor; Paul the babbler; Paul the madman! This was his lot;—to be cast into a felon's dungeon, in one city; to be stoned, in another; to be driven as an outcast from a third. That was his daily portion: and that he endured for well nigh thirty years; day by day, week by week, year after year, he ran his sad and sorrowful course of affliction and opposition: and yet, amidst all, he remained steadfast and true. A martyr for Christ, he parted with all.

Do you ask, what was the moving power in this great transformation,—what was the secret of this change? I answer in the words of the text. It was the *Love of Christ* which constrained him. The conversion of St. Paul was the result of the Epiphany of Jesus Christ. It was not merely the outward circumstances of the strange scene that was enacted on the road to Damascus. It was not simply the flash of light that struck the material vision. It was the light of the glory of God, seen in the face of Jesus Christ, that dazzled the highest part of his being. It was not merely the sound that was heard by his

fellow travellers, but the voice of Jesus that pleaded with his wayward heart. During those three silent days, the Love of Christ was revealed to him. It was then that he saw the meaning of that crown of thorns, and those pierced hands. It was then that he learnt the meaning of the blood that was shed on Calvary; it was then that he discovered the character of Christ, and the Love of Christ, and the longing of Christ for every human soul. And that Love over-powered him. It broke down all his prejudices; it conquered all his opposition; it *constrained* him. If you look at the meaning of the word in the original, it forced him; it bound him with bands that could not be broken. It drove him on, like the waters of a mighty river forced into a narrow channel, with huge rocks rising on either side. The vast volume of water rolls on, with its deep and solemn roar, conquering every obstacle; dashing down and carrying away everything by which its onward progress would be arrested, till it reaches the eternal ocean. So the Love of Christ, the living, loving Person of Christ, laid hold of the will of the Apostle, and transformed him. The one chant that was ringing in his ears for thirty years was this—"If one died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." This was the manifestation that took hold of St. Paul's will, and made him the fervent and believing Apostle.

And my brethren, if you, or if I, want the power of St. Paul, in our measure and degree, to overcome obstacles, to break down prejudices, to crush the rebel flesh, to rise above the world, to be indifferent alike to its praise and to its blame; if we wish to fight with the devil in his strong-holds, and to bring souls out of them, ransomed by His Precious Blood,—if, I say, we wish to follow St. Paul, we must know more of the Love of Christ, by which he was constrained.

The joys of Heaven, if they are eloquently set forth, will stir men for a time, and rouse women for a longer period, into a sentimental rhapsody; and upon those joys we are privileged to dwell, for, thank God, they are real joys. The terrors of Hell may startle a man out of his indifference; they may teach him to ask himself in calm and sober earnest: "What will it profit me, if I gain all the world, and loose my own soul?"—I say, the terrors of Hell may startle a man; and if I follow my Master, I dare not be silent upon the reality of those terrors. When Christ speaks of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched, I must be content to follow in the steps of my Lord, and to appeal to men, and beseech them not to incur that awful misery, for the sake of the fleeting joys and passing pleasures of a world from which they may be parted to-night.

But neither the joys of Heaven, nor the terrors of Hell, will give to any man that blessing of which our anthem ("*He that shall endure to the end shall be saved*") has spoken to-night:—the blessing of *endurance*. He that *endures* shall be finally saved: and nothing but the Love of Christ can give a man this perseverance. And this, my brethren, is what the Lord Jesus Christ offers to you and to me. The Epiphany is not merely a commemoration of a past event; it is a witness to a Living Power. As truly as Christ Jesus went up and down those hills of Palestine; as truly as He laid His hands upon Andrew and Philip and the Apostle Peter; as truly as—in obedience to His call—they left everything and followed Him; as truly as He manifested Himself to Saul of Tarsus; *so* truly, is He in our midst to-night—hidden indeed from the eye of sense, but yet in our midst,—for He has said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Yes; I am here to-night, simply to witness for my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was nailed to that cross for each of you. I am not here to puzzle you with theories as to the explanation of the Atonement. I am here to witness for the living Lord Jesus Christ, that He died upon that cross for *you*; that He draws near to you to-night, and appeals to the highest part of *your* being, as He appealed to the highest part of St. Paul's being. He says, "I have loved you; I came from Heaven and died upon the cross, because I loved you; I have never forgotten you, all your life; in your joy and in your sorrow, I have thought of you. When the one sheep out of the hundred went astray, I left the ninety and nine, and followed it; I was near, when that little child of yours was laid in its coffin; I was near you, when you stood beside that open grave and heard the words, 'Dust to dust, ashes to ashes;' I was near you then, and asked for your heart. I was near you on that morning, when you rose up ashamed of the night you had passed,—ashamed at the recollection of the prayers you had uttered in holier and happier days by a mother's knee; when your self-respect was gone, I, Jesus Christ, was still near to you, then." Yes, my brethren, He *is* near to you *now*, and He offers to receive you, just *as you are*. He, the living Jesus, who once died for you, speaks to you to-night, and says, "I love you; I have known you; I have thought of you; when you were wandering over that weary desert, I was following you; when you were blessed with prosperity, I was by you; through all your years, I have never forgotten you:—and to-night I have *found* you. To-night, in My holy house, I appeal to you. Will you do as Saul of Tarsus did? Will you yield up that being of yours to Me? Thou mayest be blind, to-night; thou mayest not be able to see the light, nor the road by which thou shalt here-

after go, but I, the Lord, will guide thee: I will lead thee to some one,—it may be to some brother or sister, it may be to some clergyman,—who has known for himself the mighty power of the Love of Christ in transforming the whole being, and making earth and time, foretastes of heaven and eternity." It may be that to him thou shalt be guided, as Saul was to Ananias.

This night, the Lord appeals to thee. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. When I hung upon that Cross, they were all known to Me; and My Blood (O thank God for that truth!) cleanseth from all sin. Thou wast baptized, that thou mightest be certain of this: that whenever thy will was yielded, thou mightest have no doubt about the remission of thy sins. Come then to Me, yield thyself to Me, just as thou art, without one plea beside this, that My blood was shed for thee."

That is what the Lord is saying to you to-night. The future, He only knows. It may be that before to-morrow you may be with Him, like the penitent thief in Paradise. It may be that you have yet years of work to do for him, just as the thirty years lay before Saul of Tarsus. I cannot tell. All I know is that the Lord has need of thee—that he is asking thee to surrender thyself. If I went to thee, as a man, and asked thee to surrender thyself up to *me*, thou wouldst have little difficulty in understanding my meaning. Canst thou not then understand what thy Lord is saying to thee? He it is who is "altogether lovely;" and dead indeed—cold as that cloud-capped peak of Hermon—must be the heart of that man, who can listen to the tale of Gethsemane and Calvary, and be untouched by that sympathizing human love. Christ asks you, now, to wash the sin of the past away; and He offers you strength and power to battle to the end of your days, against the sins by which you have been so easily beset.

O my brothers, strangers though you are, one's heart goes out to you, as one speaks to you in this Holy House of God! Yield each of you, yield, my brother, to Him who died for thee, who lives to help thee. This is the old, old story. This is the one balm for which we are all yearning in our weariness; which alone can heal the wounds of our humanity—the Lord Jesus Christ; the living Person who lays hold of our hearts with all the comfort and power, which He alone is able to impart. O, yield to Him, and you will find what is the meaning of the text. Be silent for awhile, as Saul of Tarsus was during these three days at Damascus, and let the Love of Christ flow into your hearts. Look up to Him whom you cannot see by the eye of the flesh, and by the power of the Holy Ghost He will manifest Himself to you. For *you*, there shall be an Epiphany. I have seen it in hundreds of cases; and, please God, it will be mani-

fested to you also. Let that Love once flow into your heart, and like a mighty river it must carry all before it. The old self-righteousness, the old dependence upon mere outward forms, upon a mere evangelical Shibboleth, upon your breadth of view and your intellectual grasp, will all be swept away by the mighty torrent of the Love of Christ flowing into your heart. You will be astonished at yourself, as your lips are opened and you find yourself able to help others. You will be astonished, when you feel the power of that Love, and that strength, which is made perfect in weakness ; and the living God who has called you, and redeemed you, and baptized you, and washed your sins away, will never leave you, never forsake you. That mighty current of His Love will carry you on, breaking down every obstacle, until it has borne you on to the great ocean of the Father's Love, where you shall see God as He sees *you* to-night, and love Him as He loves you ; where every intellectual difficulty will be solved, and every burden of the world be left behind ; where, in a deeper and truer sense than we have ever been able to utter the words on earth, we shall join our voices in that grand chant : "The Love of Christ constraineth us." Old things (thank God) will have passed away for ever, and the new heavens and the new earth will be realized. Old things will have passed away, and all things will have become new, through the power of the Epiphany of Jesus Christ. And this shall be the burden of our new song : "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honour and glory ;" aye, "blessing and honour and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever !"

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. W. W. LANE, D.D., F.R.G.S., F.R.S.L.,

PREACHED AT ST. PETERS'-UPON-CORNHILL,
LONDON.

"Praying in the Holy Ghost, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."—Jude, 20 v.

What a happy heaven fore-tasting life might the children of God enjoy on earth, if they would but live a life of prayer ! In the midst of the wildest storms they might be calm ; in the deepest tribulations they might be joyful. When all around might be agitation and alarm, the prayerful believer might be cheerful and composed ; because, that heaven smiles across their path, and the peace of heaven dwells within the heart. In alpine regions travellers are often encompassed with a clear atmosphere, and cloudless sunshine, while traversing the summits of these lofty mountains, while at the very same time, the world below is wrapt in mists and darkness, and thunder clouds are bursting at their feet. So does a life of prayer lift the believer to a loftier and a serener region, far, far above the clouds and storms that darken and distract this lower world. In that region of purity and peace, the atmosphere is clear and calm ; and the light of God's countenance shines brightly on the believer's soul, while he sees the thunder-clouds of earthly care and sorrow, rolling beneath his feet ; realizing that poetic illustration :—

"As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm ;
Though round its base the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

I. Prayer is the divinely appointed means of obtaining all the promised blessings, needful for our spiritual and eternal welfare. This truth is quite clear to the student of Scripture. The lips of eternal truth have uttered words which prove the necessity of prayer, and also prove the omnipotent efficacy of prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ; for everyone that asketh.

receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened !" " If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things, give the Holy Spirit, to them that ask him." " Be careful for nothing," says St. Paul, " but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God !" Again, " Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ; praying always, with all prayers and supplication, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Again, " Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving ;" and, as if the life of the believer should be as one uninterrupted act of prayer, inspiration exhorts " Pray without ceasing." How solemn are St. Peter's words of admonition, " The end of all things is at hand ; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." St. James gives us both advice and encouragement, " If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Then the loving disciple, St. John, adds this gladdening declaration, " This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will he heareth us ; and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

What ! is it true that God's best blessings can be had for simply asking for them ; Oh, then, how utterly inexcusable must those children of God be, who, by neglecting the gracious arrangement, which God himself has appointed, remain in want of the blessings he is waiting to bestow. Hence, in the midst of " bread enough and to spare " in our Father's house, many of the children of God starve, and continue from day to day in a spiritual condition, like the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream, emaciated, famishing, and ready to perish.

God says, " open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." What wonder then, if those who neglect the means of grace and prayer, grow into a state of spiritual poverty and destitution. " They have not, because they ask not"—or if they ask at all, they " ask amiss"—they ask coldly, they ask carelessly. They talk much about God in public, but talk very little with God in private. They are known to engage in exercises many, but not devotional ones. They are seen in numerous attitudes, but seldom on their knees. Therefore the Holy Ghost is not fully given, because not fervently and properly implored.

II. We cannot lay down any specific rule as to the length of our prayers, this will at all times depend upon the circumstances in which we are placed. The best prayer that was ever composed is a very short one, but we must not forget that He who composed it, while on earth, spent whole nights in prayer.

III. What you and I want in our prayers, is a sincerity of soul, a heart-breathed earnestness, such a feeling as marked the wrestling Jacob, when he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Such a feeling as Abraham had, when for the sixth time he pleaded, "Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak, yet but this once." Such a feeling as inspired the great law-giver of Israel, when, after having received the promise of God's presence, in a holy ardour he cried out, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Such a feeling as seemed to be the life blood of the royal psalmist's devotions, and animating the whole body of the psalms. Such a feeling as Ezra had, when, "at the evening sacrifice he arose, and having rent his garments and his mantle, he fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord." Such a feeling as Hezekiah's when he spread Senacherib's letter before the Lord, and prayed unto his God. Such a feeling as Daniel's when he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, and prayed unto the Lord his God." I speak of such a feeling, as constrained blind Bartimeus, when they urged him to hold his peace, to cry out the more earnestly, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Such a feeling as the nobleman's, who, when the Lord asked him if he believed, so as to secure the recovery of his child, answered with tears, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Such a feeling as prompted the Canaanitish woman to persevere in her petitions, amidst the most discouraging rebukes, with an unconquerable importunity, which drew from the Saviour's lips a glorious commendation of her faith. Such a feeling as burst from the lips of the sinking Peter, when he shouted, "Lord save me, I perish;" and from St. Paul, who, when tormented with the thorn in the flesh, he thrice besought the Lord, that it might depart from him; but above all, such a feeling as glowed in the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, the Son of God himself, "when, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly, and in the anguish of His soul, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying, and tears"—without this feeling, in its sincerity, if not in its strength—in its essence, if not in its energy—offering up a mere form of words, even though they may be evangelical in sentiment, and eloquent in expression, is no more prayer, than a beautifully sculptured statute is a man; a heartless form of words is as the body without the soul, it is the form of worship without the spirit, it is a mockery of the Almighty, it is a waste of breath, it is a sinful expenditure of time, it is a cheat to our own souls, it is a libel on devotion, it is a gratification to Satan, and it is an insult to God. Oh, may the Holy Spirit help our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for, or how we should pray; but the spirit itself

will make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.

IV. Another reflection of the subject of prayer, is, that we should endeavour in divine strength, to keep up a communion with God, right through the day. "Pray without ceasing"; walk with God, live in God, and wait on God, for he says, "They that honour me, I will honour." If he sees that it is the first and dearest desire of our heart to be with God, and whatever we are doing, to do it to his glory; amidst our employments and recreations, to realize the sense of his presence, and cherish the remembrance of his love; and that our silent prayer is ever going up towards the throne, "Let the words of my lips, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." If he sees that we keep a holy guard, a constant watchfulness over our hearts, that we may not be ensnared, either into any indulgence in unlawful things, or, even such an immoderate indulgence in things lawful, as would unfit us for high and holy converse with Himself; Oh! will He not, when he observes how we value and pant after communion with Him, meet us in the sacred retirement of our closets, in all the fulness of his love; and by the sweetest smiles of his countenance, and the tenderest whisperings of his voice, pour into our hearts, a joy indeed unspeakable and full of glory.

V. Again. When we approach our God in prayer, we should cherish a spirit of reverential awe. How many rush into the presence of the Almighty with irreverent thoughtlessness, and a disrespectful precipitation, with which they would not dare to hurry into the presence of an earthly king. This must be offensive to the King of Kings, as arguing an utter forgetfulness or disregard, both of who He is, and what we are. If those angels of His that excel in strength and holiness—those glowing seraphims that are as a flame of fire, burning with fervent love and zeal—if the most exalted principalities and powers of heaven veil their faces before Him who sitteth upon the throne, and cast their crowns at the foot of that throne in lowliest adoration; oh, with what profoundest prostration of spirit, and deepest solemnity of soul, does it become poor, weak, sinful worms of the dust, like us, to come into the presence of the infinitely great and glorious God. It is our duty then, before we bow the knee in supplication, to seek to have our spirit suitably affected by the consideration of the majesty of the being we address, for we speak in prayer to Him, before whom heaven's highest archangels presume not to appear, but with veiled faces: we speak in prayer with Him, who chargeth those angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean.

Before we approach the throne of God in prayer, let us pause

a little, to reflect on what Scripture has told us of that throne. Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims; and one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; and the whole earth is full of His glory." Daniel says: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth, from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." St. John, in the Apocalyptic vision, says: "I was in the spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven; and one sat on the throne, and out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices. The four and twenty elders fell down before Him that sat on the throne, and worshiped Him that liveth for ever, and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne. And I beheld; and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice—worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen."

Is this then a throne for a poor sinner to approach irreverently or carelessly? Shall a mortal voice mingle with those voices round the throne and not be filled with awe? Shall a worm of the dust join with such worshippers, and in such worship, and not bow down in the deepest humility; the most reverential adoration? If God is ever listening to the hallelujahs of the spirits round the throne, if he receives the worship of the seraphim, how infinite is the condescension in Him, to accept your homage and my homage; we, who are but children of corruption and sin—to take heed to our broken lisps of prayer—and to give ear to our stammering songs of praise!

VI. Once more; while we approach God with a profound spirit of reverential awe, it should be tempered and softened with a spirit of the most affectionate freedom—a spirit of grateful and confiding love. For God's goodness is as unlimited as his majesty and glory, for he is "the Lord, the Lord God; merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." This union therefore, of confiding affection, sobered and solemnized by reverential awe,

is the very spirit in which we should draw near to "Our Father which art in heaven." It does equal homage to his majesty and his love. It combines what St. John felt, while leaning on the bosom of his beloved Master, at the last supper, with what he felt, when in the apocalyptic vision he fell at his feet as dead! It unites what a grateful child feels when folded in a father's arms, with what the adoring seraph feels when bending before the Eternal's throne! If then the Christian enquirer asks in what spirit he should approach God in prayer? I would say, it should pre-eminently be with that contrite heart, which he has so graciously assured us he will not despise. Come in the spirit of Jacob, when he cried, "I am not worthy of the least of all these mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto thy servant." Come in the spirit of David, when he poured forth the very soul of pestilential sorrow, and exclaimed, "Have mercy upon me, Oh! God, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions; hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities; cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Come in the spirit of Manasseh, when, in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication. Come in the spirit of Ezra, when he rent his garment, and fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, and said; "Oh! my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face up to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up to the heavens" Another reflection is:—

VII. Humility should form in us a grand characteristic.

"The loaded bee the lowest flies;
The richest pearl the deepest lies;
The stalk the most replenished
Doth bow the most its modest head.
Thus deep humility we find
The mark of every master-mind;
The highest gifted lowliest bends,
And merit meekest condescends,
And shuns the fame, that fools adore,
That puff that bids a feather soar."—*Colton*.

You remember it was the publican who humbled himself before God, and went down to his house justified, rather than the haughty Pharisee—"Pride goeth before destruction." For a time the Athenian General Timotheus seemed to prosper in his every enterprise. Envy caused a picture to be painted representing Timotheus sleeping, and Fortune stood by his side taking cities for him in nets. Angry at the implied insinuation he said "I owe my success, not to Fortune, but to myself."

Plutarch says that from that hour the goddess of Fortune left him, and from that day he was never successful.

In France it was the time honoured custom for the Sovereign Pontiff to preside at the Imperial coronation. But the first Napoleon placed the crown upon his own head and said, "I owe my crown to no one, this good right arm has won it for me—I propose and I dispose." This impiety was contradicted, when, alone, Napoleon stood a prisoner on his sea girt isle of St. Helena, a living commentary on the truth, that it is God who disposes, and that He giveth even crowns to whomsoever he will. Oh! there is no place (dear hearers,) on earth so sweet as the valley of humiliation. There is no safer place to dwell than at the feet of Jesus. The simple song of the shepherd boy, which the pilgrims heard him singing as they passed along the valley road, has deep meaning for us all ;—

"He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low no pride,
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

VIII. But then there are hindrances to prayer :—

"What various hindrances we meet,
In coming to a mercy-seat."

These are the suggestions of the enemy—cold formality ; listless vacancy ; wanderings of thought ; vicious imaginations mingle with our expressions of penitence ; or gratitude ; or holy joy. Talking to God, but not thinking of Him—His name on our lips, but worldly cares in our hearts ; Satanic influence—all these are hindrances, but never mind :—

"Hope, and pray on,
Faith and prayer are strong."
"Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees."

And well he may tremble, for he knows that the fervent prayer of faith, makes the believer strong, and gives him a counter charm to all his spells, it arrays the believer with an armour against which no weapon (forged in hell's smithy) can prosper, for the prayer of faith is a shield which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

IX. Finally.—Remember the text—"Praying in the Holy Ghost, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Remember that of ourselves we can do nothing.

"Help I every moment need."

We cannot take one single step in our journey towards heaven, without the Holy Spirit's aid ; through Him, God promises help in our every time of need—not that we ourselves are to be idly standing still, not that we are to dwell in spiritual inactivity—but, while watching, striving, praying, labouring,

CHURCH SERMONS.

wrestling, running, using holy violence to enter heaven, giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure ; the Spirit helpeth our infirmities ; the Spirit maketh intercession for us, the Spirit is the impartor and sustainer of our spiritual life—the Spirit is the commentator on the word of God ; the revealer of mysteries—the expositor of precepts ; the remembrancer of promises ; the inspirer of prayer.

In the church, this divine spirit in every age, has been the source of its illumination—the sustainer of its influence ; its beacon and bulwark ; its guiding pillar and protecting shield ; the inspirer of prophets ; the teacher of apostles ; the upholder of martyrs ; the comforter of Christians ; the glorifier of Christ ; and to you and I, as members of his mystical body, the spirit is our Alpha and Omega, our all in all in our spiritual knowledge and our safety ; our all in all in our strength and our joy. He enlightens our understanding, regulates our will, controls our passions, cleanses our imagination, purifies our heart, and sanctifies our soul ; and if we have peace and joy in believing, and abound in hope, it is through the power of the Holy Ghost



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 11.]

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Ireland Professor of Exegesis.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—
Genesis i, 1.

Why we should begin to read the first chapter of Genesis on Septuagesima Sunday, when the Christian year has already run some nine or ten weeks, is a question which has probably occurred to more than one of us; and the answer to the question is not to be found in any personal tastes or predilections of the compilers of the English Prayer Book. The first chapter of Genesis has been for centuries the lesson for Matins, in the Services of the Western Church, long before it occupied that place in the English Prayer Book. When we proceed to enquire why, in the earlier ages of the Church, the truths of the Christian Creed were laid out, as they have come down to us for consecutive contemplation, for rather more than one half of the solar year, we find it impossible to give a simple answer to that question. That which in later ages has been accomplished by a congregation of writers, or a mission of divines, was in the earlier periods the word of some prominent Bishop, whose reputation for wisdom or sanctity governed the convictions of his contemporaries; while in the yet more primitive ages it would seem to have been arrived at instinctively by the Church's spiritual cognizance of what was due to the Church. It is indeed this which imparts so high an interest to the study of certain dogmas; it is in fact the study of the fresh soul of early Christendom, of the currents and impulses which swayed its deepest collective life, of not merely the truths which we

hold of the Christian Church, but the successive moods and characteristics of the passion with which she pressed them to her heart.

The sudden change from Isaiah to Genesis is probably to be explained by the consideration, that on Septuagesima Sunday we pass a great dividing line of the Christian Year, and, as the name of the day implies, everything is relative to, preparatory for, the Easter Festival. Before looking once more in our lives fully in the face those stupendous acts which constitute the very chord and centre of the Christian Creed, the Passion and the Resurrection from the dead of the Incarnate Son of God, we are led to take our measure, the measure of our true place in the Universe, and our relation to the Being who created it. We fall back upon these elementary truths for a moment, that we may the better do justice to the real significance of those central doctrines of the Christian Creed, since they fill up the outline, and afford a relief from difficulties which natural religion or elementary primitive traditions cannot fail to suggest. A serious theism, a reverend study of God or nature is the true instructor. To know what God is, and what we are, is to have found the schoolmaster, who, unless we are become inattentive in reading his directions, will sooner or later, like the Jewish law of old, lead us down to Christ.

When Man looks out from himself upon the wonderful home in which he is placed, upon the various orders of living things around him, upon the solid earth upon which he treads, upon the heavens into which he gazes with such ever varying impressions by day and by night; when he looks to the mechanism of his own bodily frame especially endowed with these particular faculties, these limbs and no other; when he turns his thought as he alone among the creatures can turn it, and when he takes to pieces by subtle analysis the beautiful instrument which places him in conscious relationship to the universe around him, his first and last anxiety is to account for the origin of all this, to answer the Question of questions, "How and Why he came to be." Nor is the anxiety diminished, much less destroyed, when he has become comparatively familiar with the wonders before him, when he has multiplied his opportunities for observing them, and has collated his observations; when he has generalised, and tested his generalisations by experience, and feels himself at home in the universe under the leadership of science. Certainly theology, if she understands her own interest, can have no wish to disparage or discountenance physical science. She may indeed decline to revise her Bible in deference to this or that tentative hypothesis which the imagination, rather than the positive knowledge of this or that eminent person, may suggest, but from the mental discipline which physical science

creates she has ever gained. Whatever be the conquests of physical science in detail, whatever amount of light it may bring to bear upon the reading and structure of the universe around us, all this does not dispose of the question which dominates all else, "How and Why did all this come to be?" Science may unveil regular modes of work, she may know that the defects, supposed in one age of the world to be due to some direct interference from above, are referable to ascertained agencies below. She may substitute; and that to a degree beyond all our past or even present conceived ideas, the Doctrines of Developments in life, of distinction between living species; but the Question of questions still remains, Who furnished the original material? Who gave it the first impulse? Who has conducted this presumed development, or in what do we exist at all? And this question it is, which is answered by the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" and that answer is accepted by every Christian in his creed—"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible." What do we mean by "Creation?" Nothing *less* than giving being to *that* which before was not. The Hebrew word *Barah*, which means to cut out or hew, means also to create, and it relates only to Divine Creation, to the giving existence to that which did not exist before; the word itself does not indeed exclude the idea of pre-existent material, or pre-existent force; since it is used in the book of Genesis for the creation of man, and in the book of Numbers for an earthquake, and in the fifty-first Psalm for a purified heart—the product of the grace of God acting on the natural heart. But the context at the beginning of Genesis precludes the idea of its being used in the modification of any previously existing force or matter, since the expression, "the heaven and the earth," is the most comprehensive phrase the Hebrews could employ to mean the Universe, the universe being here regarded as a twofold whole of very unequal parts.

The word "heaven" includes not merely the material bodies which astronomy has in view, but those immaterial *essences* whose existence is a matter of subsequent revelation, and which are much more ancient than man. The work of the fourth *period* or *day* pre-supposes this act, since the Hebrew word properly translated "light bearers" show that the work of this period was merely, by the removal of some perceptible atmosphere or otherwise, to place the already existing heavenly bodies into such a relation to this planet—which was to be the abode of man—as to influence its development.

That the Jews understood the real significance of the first verse of Genesis is sufficiently endorsed. Thus says one writer,

"Those who believed in the laws of their master Moses, held that the whole world, which comprehended everything except the Creator, itself having been in a state of non-existence, received its existence from God, being called into existence out of nothing—it is the fundamental principle of our law" he continues, "that God created the world from nothing."

The mother of the Maccabean Martyrs, when she strengthens her youngest boy for his last agony, before the presence of the tyrant, bids him look upon the heaven, upon the earth, upon all that is therein, and then consider that God had made them out of things that were not. In the Mosaic account of the creation the statement which towers above all else, and compared with which all else is subordinate detail, is this opening announcement "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" it governs the whole theology of the Old and New Testament, it stands in the sharpest contrast to the current doctrines of Heathenism, which regarded the Universe and ascribed all *light* and *life* to a mere unaccountable modification of primeval matter, or took refuge in some grotesque legend which traced Man's origin to an egg or a creation of chaos.

At the present moment then, in Europe, this great question is met with an avowed materialism, sometimes with systematic atheism, much more frequently, in England at least, with a habit of mind which declines the question altogether as being analogical, as being metaphysical, as lying beyond the range of our experience, as bearing on the region of speculation. Who has not read books of late which, to an earnest Christian or an earnest Deist, suggest irresistibly this—the problem of problems—but in which again and again, most inextricably as it seems, the problem is studiously, significantly, passed by, till it can be declined no longer, and then at last we find ourselves before it in phrases of studied and profound reverence; phrases in which the writer bends before something we know not, perhaps he knows not what, a something which is not named. It may be to make all right in case a Theism should turn out to be true after all; it may be, by way of traditional propriety, to satisfy large existing bodies of faith and opinion. But as Christians, "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Creation is a mystery, satisfactory to reason, but strictly beyond it. *Nothing within the range of our experience enables us to understand the process of calling a being into existence out of nothing.* We may do much in the way of modifying and controlling existing matter and force, but we can create, properly speaking not the minutest particle of the one or of the other. The initial act by which God summoned them into being is a matter of faith which we believe on His authority, but which we never could verify.

If, as is probable, the Mosaic Cosmogony is much older than Moses, and was a primeval revelation, still it must have been strictly a revelation ; no created sense could have witnessed the act by which the Creator ended the solitariness of His eternity, and surrounded Himself with forms of life : and what I would now briefly insist on is the practical value of belief in creation, its value in thought, its value as to conduct.

It is, then, this creation of the world out of nothing which is the only account of its origin compatible with belief in a Personal and Moral God, for there can be but *four* possible forms of belief on the subject : either God is a product of the world, or God is really identical with the world, or God and the world are distinct in their existence, or God created the world. To say that God is a product of the world, that He is produced by it and exists only in it, to the thought or rather the imagination of thinking beings, is in fact but saying that He does not exist at all. You may pay high compliments to a creation of the human mind, or you may denounce it as pernicious or mischievous, but in either case, whatever may be its comparative power for good or evil, you do not yourself take it, as though it were a *living thing*, into your calculations of thinking or acting ; and your loyalty to truth and the fact, would only lead you to dismiss it somewhat impatiently as a phantom which might well have haunted the childhood of our race, but which has no business to flit about the brain of its manhood. To say that God is a product of the thinking world, as distinct from a real objective being apprehended by its thought, is to assert, in other terms, that the *universe only* exists.

If, again, God and the World are two names for the same thing ; if the universe is only the self-development of the infinite, and man only that point in which the infinite attains a conscience, then it is clear that we are still playing with words. God, I will not say in the sense of the Bible, but God in the sense of the human heart, is nowhere ; the *name* is retained, the *belief* has vanished, just as easily as in the blankest atheism. For such a God is neither Personal nor Moral, He is not personal since He lacks the very elements of personality, He is only that force, which it is difficult to say why He ultimately becomes. And, apart from the difficulty of supposing morality in an impersonal subject, He is not moral because he is by hypothesis identified with all the creative activities of the universe. The real believer in the Divine Omnipresence, who sees God everywhere, seeing His upholding hand, even in the forces of evil turned against himself, is yet careful to distinguish between the perverted will, in whose activity evil only is resident, and the activity of the All Holy Creator.

And if, to avoid this difficulty, we suppose God and the

world to be distinct, but, comparatively co-existent, do we really secure a moral and personal God? Surely not; for this last hypothesis involves the sacrifice of all that lies at the root of any idea of God in our minds at all—His solitary self-existence.

If the universe has from eternity co-existed along with Him, though it be only in form and matter, as yet unshaped by eternal force, so that its gradual elaboration into form and life is reserved to Him, as being, within His element an all controlling agent; still, if we think steadily He has really disappeared. This consequent semi-existence is a supposition which annihilates Him. He has ceased to be. The supposition belongs in fact and strictly to a transitional stage of thought, when men are attempting unlikely compromises which cannot hold in the long run. It throws us back upon an universe without an *objective* God, or, upon an universe which is itself God, upon *atheism* or *pantheism*, and upon the possibilities, avowed or disguised, of no serious religious belief at all. Thus our faith in the creation of the universe out of nothing is alone consistent with a belief in God as a personal and moral life; but let us observe, as I have already implied, that such belief in an initial creative act, is quite consistent with belief in subsequent modifications of this creation through progressive development, guided by a more or less ascertainable law. The narrative of Moses includes a subsequent development as well as an initial creative act; he recognizes God's continuous working in nature in the form and according to the methods of law. In the remarkable passage where he is describing the forms which may be assumed by the creative activity of God, Peter Lombard uses words which, if I rightly understand them, and it, read like an anticipation of Mr. Darwin's doctrine as to the origin of species, though I am far from saying that the master of sentences, with his eye upon the text of Genesis, would have quoted this hypothesis as far as the modern writer would have pressed the theory. But, if we could justly and reasonably carry the theory of development so far as to trace all living beings to some one germ, the real question of questions would still confront us, how did that development which we can, as we think, trace within limits more or less considerable, come itself originally into being at all? And upon the answer to this question depends nothing less than a man's belief in the Being, who, if He exists at all, has infinitely more important claims on our most earnest homage and attention than anything which He has made.

But belief in the creation of the universe by God out of nothing, naturally leads us on to a belief in God's *providence*, and to a belief in the consummate manifestation of providence in human history—to the belief in *redemption*. No such anticipa-

tions would have been reasonable if we could suppose that the world had emanated from a passive God, or had existed along side of Him. But if He created, the question will, at any rate be asked, *why* did he create? Could it add anything to His blessedness and His glory? Could it make Him more powerful, more wise? Revelation answers this question by ascribing the creation to that quality in God which leads Him to communicate His love, that quality in Him which is *goodness*, if considered in its relation to personal beings. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." But if love or goodness was the true motive of the creation it at least implies a continuous and deep interest in created life. If it urged Him at first to reveal Himself in His work under finite conditions (and both David and St. Paul insist upon the supreme significance of creation as unfolding the hidden love of God), it might urge Him to reveal Himself personally also, under finite conditions.

If it is not beneath God's dignity to create a finite world, it is not beneath His dignity to accept the consequences of His own work; to take part by His presence in the development of His creatures, to subject Himself in some sense to the conditions of His own creation. If, in His knowledge, He necessarily anticipates such development of His work, so that to Him a thousand years are as one day, yet, by His love on the other hand which led Him to move out of Himself in creation at first, He travels with the slow onward movement of nature and humanity, and His Incarnation in time, when demanded by the supreme needs of the creatures of His hand, is in a line with the first and most mysterious act of all, His deigning to create. "God having created the world, so (it is natural it should be so) loved it, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Of this profound love of God there is, indeed, on earth one of the most beautiful and instructive shadows, the love of a parent for his child. Such love is the most disinterested, the purest, the strongest, of human passions. The parent hopes for nothing from his child, yet he will work for it, he will suffer for it, he will die for it. If you ask him why, it is if he gives his deepest reason, because he has been the means of bringing it into existence. If it lives it may indeed, in years to come, support and comfort him in his old age, but that is not the motive of his anxious care. He feels at once the glory and the responsibility of his fatherhood, and this leads him to do what he can for the helpless infant that depends upon him. Our Lord appeals to this profound instinct when he teaches us the efficacy of prayer. If men, steeped in evil as they are, yet know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall a spiritual God,

your heavenly Father, give the best of gifts—His Holy Spirit, to them that ask him. And in truth this principle is obviously of wider application ; it informs us how it was, as the apostle puts it, “that after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”

The creation is indeed a consideration which governs the religious thought of a sincere believer ; it precludes numberless *a priori* difficulties as to the existence of miracles ; the one supreme miracle of all, which governs all, is already admitted by Deism. It precludes difficulties on the score of the condescension of God, in the incarnation, in the crucifixion, in the sacraments ; the great condescension of all was the act which summoned creatures into being at first. As the prophetic references to creation so constantly imply, creation prepares us to see a purpose, whether fully or partially discernible or not, running through human history. And it removes any difficulty, even from the belief that any single human soul as it glides in the awful course of its history, and the complexity of its movement, and will, and passion, before the *all-seeing eye*, is to Him a matter of the deepest, most individualising concern, so deep, so tender, it might well be that no other being existed to share His love. Each who knows anything really about Him may exclaim with the apostle “He loved *me* and gave himself for *me*.”

And, lastly, belief in creation is practically of the highest possible value. The disinclination to be under a felt obligation, is always more or less natural to us men, and it is particularly natural to those who are in rude health and high spirits, and who have never yet known what real sorrow is, or what acute disease. It goes with the sentiment of personal independence, it goes along with advanced forms of civilization, and if it is distinctly allied to one or two of the better elements of human character, it is more closely allied with the base and unworthy ones. The Eastern Emperor who executed his courtier, who, by saving his life, had done a service which could never be forgotten, is an extreme illustration of what exists in every day life, in this state of feeling.

A darker example of the same tendency is seen in the case of men who have wished a father in his grave, not on account of any misunderstanding between parent and child, not with the gross desire of succeeding to the family property, but because in the father the son saw—could not but see—one to whom he owed not education merely, but his birth into the world ; and felt that so vast a debt as this made him morally insolvent so long as his creditor lived. And if men are capable of such feeling towards each other, we can understand much which characterises man’s conduct to his Parent of parents—God. By His very existence

He seems to inflict upon them a perpetual humiliation. To feel day by day, hour by hour, that there is at any rate, One Being in existence before Whom they, great as they may be, are as nothing; from Whom they hold originally, and moment by moment, all that they are and all that they have; One who holds them in His hand, holds them so absolutely at His disposal that no human parallel can possibly convey the sense of the reality of their dependence on His good pleasure. And yet if God exists, this, nothing less than this, is strictly, is literally true; and its truth, brethren, is not diminished by any one of the unlikely expedients whereby men endeavour to lessen their sense of obligation by dwelling on the long (they may be very true) series of developments, and the thick net-works of physical law around them; expedients by which they would fain place at a distance from themselves, or would hide out of sight the mighty, the all-including activity of the Great Creator.

After all, it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. Not we ourselves; of course we never should say that we were our own creators in so many words, but we *may* morally assume this position, we may forget the One Being who made us and all besides, and who will judge us; we may forget Him so entirely as to live as if he did not exist at all. Thousands—it is a simple matter of experience—do so forget him. You see in their very faces that they have no notion that they have a Creator to think about and to live for; and yet, apart from all question of consequences, *it is true*, true to the real law of this universe in which we live, true to a truth which alone can keep us in our proper place of humble, submissive, resigned, obedient, yet withal a hopeful, a thankful, a diligent service. Yes, hopeful and thankful, for, as I said at first, Creation leads us up to Redemption.

A traveller in Cornwall, when gazing on the masses of granite rock which at the Lands' End defy, and look as if they could defy for ever, the continuous assault of the Atlantic, has described what all of us, I suppose, have felt at some time in our lives, when face to face with the magnificence of nature, his oppressive sense of the relative insignificance of man. A few years hence and we should be beneath the sod; but these rocks would still stand where they were, still lashed by the waves, still immovable, while other eyes would gaze on them for their brief day of life, and then they, too, would close.

Yes, man is at first sight insignificant when face to face with nature; but we know, brethren, that he is not really so. In reality the rocks are less enduring than man. Man's real personal self will survive for weal or woe when another catastrophe shall have changed the surface of this planet, when the elements shall have

CHURCH SERMONS.

melted with fervent heat, when the earth and all things therein shall have been burnt up.

Let us think of that day, warranted by His word who made all things we see; it may be deferred for ages, it will surely come at last, it will not tarry, when the predestined time has come. Practically speaking, there are two supreme realities, and only two for each one of us—God, and man's inmost self, his soul. The heavens and the earth are transitional, they will pass away but the word of the Creator, His word of mercy as well as His word of justice, belongs to the imperishable, the moral essence of His being, and therefore it will not pass away. Nothing can with impunity defy His justice, so most assuredly His mercy, manifested as it is in His blessed Son, endureth for ever; and none will plead with the Creator in vain that he would not despise the work which His Hand hath made.



A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER,

(A. P. STANLEY, D.D.)

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1872.

"Let there be light."—Genesis i, 3.

There cannot be a better example to test the right and wrong use of the Bible, than the words of the text which we have just heard in the services of this day and which are intended, from first to last, to set forth the great and marvellous works of God's creation. If we were to take these words as an exact exposition of scientific truth, we should find ourselves involved in endless difficulties; in questions as to the *nature of light*; in the *question whether light could have existed on the earth before the creation of the sun and the moon*; in the question of the *time of the creation of the world*; in the question of the Hebrew cosmogony, and its relation to the other cosmogonies of creation. But, putting aside all this and taking the Bible and the Book of Genesis, in their true aspect, as the exposition of great spiritual truths, which might receive illustration from science, but which are in themselves quite independent of its detailed results, then this great text is full of the deepest meaning, and is one of the most remarkable instances of what we may call the "organic knot" which, in spite of all the differences of its several parts, binds the whole Bible together.

And God said, "Let there be light!" This is the very first expression which the Bible contains of the Divine will. It is according to the conception of the sacred writer, the *first voice* which broke the silence of eternity. It is a tribute to the paramount greatness, the inestimable value of light over darkness, for all the coming ages of the world then first struggling into existence. Well might the ancient philosopher exclaim, on reading this passage, that it was the very model of sublime expression. Well might the great English poet, Milton, in his long solitary night of blindness, draw from this text his own lofty and pathetic reflections:—

"Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of the eternal co-eternal, beam,
May I express thee, unblam'd? Since God is light,
And never but in unapproach'd light
Dwelt from Eternity; dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate!

CHURCH SERMONS.

Or hear'st thou rather, pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,
Before the Heav'ns thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite."

It has been truly felt that this Divine command, thus solemnly announced, is the key note of the whole Bible. False religions have their refuge, not in light but in darkness. Let there be darkness! they say; let there be mystery; let there be shadow; let there be secrets; let there be gloom! But true religion has alway said, "Let there be light"; let there be brightness; let there be warmth; let there be cheerfulness; let there be openness; let there be knowledge; let there be enlightenment! "Doubtless, so long as we linger in this Valley of the Shadow of Death," we must see "as through a glass, darkly"; but, nevertheless, the object of Revelation is—as its very name implies—the design of Providence to diminish the shadow, to illuminate the darkness, as far as possible. Christ, we are told, was the light as well as the life of the world. One main purpose of His coming was to proclaim upon the housetops what had formerly been told only in secret closets. One main purpose of His work in the midst of men was to make them, not children of the mist, but children of light. The last words of the Book of Revelation agree with the first words of Genesis; describing the perfection of the blessed it says—"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light and the Lamb is the light thereof." Such is the general force of this passage, and we feel therefore, that it is no false application of the words, when they have been used to express each successive disclosure of light, whether in nature or grace.

Those of you who have ever visited the great German city of Strasbourg, may remember that there stands in the market place, the image of its most renowned citizen, the first founder of the noble art which we are met here this morning to commemorate. On the pedestal of his statue are written the simple words of this first creative fiat, "Let there be Light." It is indeed no exaggeration of the great event which that statue celebrates. There was *light*! It was then as if the forces of creation were once again brooding over the formless deep of the middle ages. In a few years from the time when Guttenburg set up his printing press at Strasbourg, the treasures of Greek and ancient learning were scattered over Europe by the fall of Constantinople. In a few years yet again, a new world was to be discovered beyond the Atlantic by Columbus; and in a few years more, was to dawn the great era of the Reformation. For the diffusion of light through these vast expansions of the

human horizon, a new and mighty instrument was required; and that instrument was found in the Art of Printing. Through that single mechanical contrivance the rays of light were shed north and south, east and west; cottage and palace, castle and convent felt the shock, and the light thus kindled became by reason of the very means which had kindled it, absolutely inextinguishable. Never did the appliances of matter so assist the efforts of mind; never did the human intellect so identify itself with the craft of mechanical skill. Printers and authors, the press and literature became thus bound together by links which can never be broken—a mysterious, invisible, but indelible alliance. I remarked once, elsewhere, the singular, but most appropriate, coincidence that one of the first founders of the Art of Printing, has become the subject of the most magnificent work of Goëthe the German poet.—Faust, the companion of Guttenburg, was the vehicle chosen by the instinct of the great German, who adorned the close of the last, and the beginning of this century, to represent the struggles of the human intellect in its search after truth; in its craving for light; in its wrestling with the great problems which affect human thought; and through which the light may be seen in its agonising conflict with darkness. The first printer has been transformed into a type of the eager, restless, enquiring student, sometimes bewildered, sometimes almost lost, but in the end, let us hope, delivered and saved.

And this brings me to the more special subject of this discourse.—The Inauguration of the Westminster Abbey Printers' Fund (the Caxton Fund). The art of printing, and the skill of Guttenburg, and the legend and dreams of Faust, represent the spread of light in its purer intellectual aspect; an aspect, which if it be taken by itself, can never be thought unworthy of the great text, which, as I have said, was taken as the motto of its founders—nor unworthy of the gratitude of all religious men. But in the origin of English printing, the same truth is represented to us in a softer, and gentler, and more universal aspect. I venture to say, in the connection which has brought us together here to-day—namely, the connection between Caxton and Westminster Abbey, I see the verification of the truth of the text in a still closer and more lively form; I see the traces of the invisible union which ought to exist, and which since then, has existed; and which we fervently pray may more and more exist between Knowledge and Religion. Caxton—the venerable patriarch of English printers—set up his press, (as he himself tells us in the title pages of his earliest works,) in Westminster Abbey—that is, as we must suppose, within its precincts,—probably in the Chapel of Saint Anne beside the ancient Almonry. There he worked, beneath the

fostering care of the kindly Abbot Eastney, whose tomb in our northern aisle has lately been rescued from its long neglect. There too, it would seem, he received the gracious protection of that princely Lady Margaret, whose stately figure may still be seen in the chapel of her Royal son, the pious foundress of colleges, the noble patroness of learning and art; of whom it was declared "that every one who knew her loved her, and that everything she said and did became her." Of this connection with our precincts the remembrance was never lost. It was recorded as I have said, again and again in the title pages of Caxton's printed books and in the Abbey itself. Caxton is said to have lingered often in Poet's Corner, and to have once put up a memorial plate over the grave of Chaucer. Beneath the shadow of these walls, in the adjacent church of Saint Margaret, his remains are laid. Of that ancient Almonry Chapel, in which he first set up his press and worked, every vestige has disappeared from the spot where it stood; but the memory of it, is still retained in the singular name of "chapel," given by printers to the meetings of their body, as if a savour of the old ecclesiastical atmosphere still hovered over them. I discern, as I have said, and I call you to discern in this original—in this long continued association of printing with this church—a likeness of the secret union of the light of the church, with the light of the world, which as I have said, is wrapped up in the primeval face of creation. There is no doubt, another side of the question, on which I will for a moment dwell, to bring before you yet more closely by contrast, the connection on which I wish to insist. Some of you may call to mind—I have myself elsewhere referred to it—a striking passage in the romance of a famous French writer, in which he describes how an ecclesiastic of Notre Dame, in Paris, reading with astonishment, in the 15th century, the first printed volume from Nuremberg, exclaims with a presentiment of terror, as he turned from the wonderful pages of the book to the venerable tower of his own great Cathedral,—“This will kill that—This book will kill the Church.” Doubtless there is a certain sense, in which the presentiment was true. The book, the printed book which tends to kill the predominant glory of the human intellect—Architecture. For the force of human genius, which had hitherto vented itself only in these marvellous masterpieces of masonic art, would thenceforth find channels in all the countless branches of human culture. The mind, which once was content to show itself only in the carved walls and soaring vaults of the Cathedral or Abbey, would now be drained off into the works of a Shakespeare and of a Milton. Before Guttenburg, before Caxton, architecture was the chief, the all but universal writing of the world. After Guttenburg and Caxton, books and thought became the chief, the universal

architecture of the human mind. In this sense then, the book—the printed book, may be truly said to have killed the church; that is to say, to have killed in it whatever needed to be killed, and to have taken from it *life*, which was to be reproduced in larger and grander forms elsewhere.

But the story of Caxton reminds us that in another, a still higher sense, the Church gave *life* to the book. The text “Let there be light” stands, as we have seen at the beginning of the Bible, because it is the fitting motto of the whole history of the church, in its best and highest aspects. The growth of the printing press, under the shadow of Westminster Abbey, is an example of what the better spirits of the church did in former ages; and of what the whole church could do and may do in every age. Abbot Eastney, and the Lady Margaret, stand out as the likenesses of those noble friends of truth and goodness, who know that true Christianity is best served, not by suppressing knowledge, but promoting it; not by extinguishing, but kindling and fostering new light wheresoever it can be found. Such also, in his eager desire to promote the union between knowledge and religion, was he who can never be named without affection and respect within these walls—Dean Milman, who, when he was Canon of this church, inaugurated a life long memorial of Caxton’s connection with us. These multiplied associations of the great printer with these sacred precincts, is, or ought to be, a pledge, that at least in England, light and life shall never be torn asunder; that science, literature, and education, shall always be *religious*; because the true religion of England, is also determined always to be educated, scientific, and enlightened. It is an indication, in outward form, of how unmeaning is the divorce which some few have thought to be possible between things secular, and things religious; as though human existence, could be divided into two separate halves, without relation to each other. The most secular book may become religious if read and studied in a truthful, humble, religious spirit; and the most religious book—even the Bible itself, may become secular, from end to end, if studied in a secular, worldly, hypercritical or sectarian spirit. Every Book of the Bible if properly taught and understood, is one of the best instruments even of intellectual education; its whole spirit welcomes and stimulates knowledge, of whatever kind, which renders more easy the performance of the will of God and our duty to man. The dry light of reason, is better felt and better seen, when it comes to us blended with the “dim religious light” of genial wisdom and warm imagination, and apostolic faith, and evangelical charity. Intellect without the affections becomes itself meagre and shrivelled, the affections derive from the intellect a new strength and force; which they could not have without it.

And thus the holy union, not only between light and life, but between light and love, is yet further set before us in the special object for which this Westminster Abbey Fund is to be founded. It is for the widows and children of those who have died at their posts in this noble art. The good Abbot, who sheltered Caxton, had also a kind word and a warm heart for the widowed Queen, who there took refuge with her infant son from their enemies. Lady Margaret, who was the patroness of Erasmus, and the benefactress of both of our great Universities, had a tender eye for the poor of Westminster, for whom she provided, in the Almonry, by the side of the first establishment for printing; and were they alive now, they would, we cannot doubt, welcome the revival of this ancient connection, especially when it assumes the form of practical benevolence to the suffering and bereaved, in whom they took so deep and warm an interest. Those of us, who are familiar with the innumerable works which come from the teeming press of our day, must remember, that behind the innumerable sheets and the vast mountains of type, the constant whirl of machinery; there stands an army of living, unknown, unseen, friends, through whose close attentive eyes, and ever busy fingers, the light of God, the light of the world, the light of knowledge, and the light of grace, streams out in countless rays, into every corner of our streets and homes. It is for us to repay that anxious labour; that straining care, that wasting vigilance, and to see, that when they are dead and gone, then also into the dark corners of their bereaved homesteads shall flow the light of consolation, of cheerfulness, and of comfort to their distressed widows and children; and that thus in the humblest form, but yet not unworthy of its original, the Divine command shall be repeated for those poor widows and orphans —“ Let there be light.”

Preached in aid of the Printers' Pension and Orphan Asylum Corporation.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN

[No. 12.]

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.,

Honorary Chaplain to the Queen.

PREACHED AT ST. JAMES'S CHAPEL, YORK STREET,
ST. JAMES'S, LONDON.

ON SUNDAY FEBRUARY 4, 1872.

"Except ye become as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven."—St. Matthew xviii, 3. and St. Luke xviii, 17.

It is one of the loveliest ideas of Christ, that the kingdom of God is the kingdom of a child. It takes us back once more to the beauty of the story, on the meaning of which we have for some Sundays dwelt; when the wise men of the East knelt before the infant Christ. It consoles our tired hearts, distressed with the burdens of the Present; when we realize that, although we have followed in the footsteps of our fellow men for many years, yet we have a Father in whose loving thought we are still children; and in the midst of dull decay or fatal disease, the delightful hope arises in which we see ourselves as children, in the paradise of the new life, born again into the morning air, where everything appears of the most silvery hue. As men hover round those things dear to them, and though they may leave them at times, still return, so Christ came back again and again to those whom he loved. Of this we find records scattered throughout the Gospels. Children in Christ's eyes are sacred. "The kingdom of God," he says, "belong to them." His disciples became as little children, and they were examples and models of religious life. To be humble as one of them, is to be

greatest in the kingdom of God. There is no need to express in phrases, which have been again and again repeated, that which made so prominent a portion of His teaching; and indeed the beginning of His ministry; the beginning of the Church of Christ itself had something of the charm of childhood in it. How simple was His life at Galilee. What delightful stories were they which fell from His lips. How His disciples loved Him too. The pleasant and roaming life they led amongst the hills and fields, is idealistic of the pleasures of our childhood. This child-like simplicity is to be observed throughout the whole of Christ's childhood, His youth, and His manhood; it is to be observed through all His works, His words, and His ways. In the very midst of sorrowful or stern expressions we light here and there on phrases which conduct us into the paradise of feeling, where all is pure, where all things are ever new, where the *ideal* is the *real*, and yet creates a new ideal; phrases such as children speak now, but without any teaching, and without any knowledge of their meaning; but then phrases, when spoken by Christ, discloses some vision of that Perfect Life which they who have this child-like faith are to inherit hereafter. We look forward when we hear these things, and catch some faint notion of the glorious hereafter. We have a continual suggestion of the perfect life in the natural life of children. It is not that in childhood our life is in its perfect state; but that in many ways this perfect life is suggested. Its undefined elements are the elements of the kingdom of God into which we hope to enter hereafter. Not always, but not yet seldom, we see in our own children that which we can recall as appertaining to the time of the innocence and happiness of our own childhood; to that time when, wherever we went, all things were ours—ours, by the joy they gave us and by the love we bore to them; that was wealth which brought no pain or selfishness, or jealousy in the heart; it was wealth which none could take away from us, and its accumulations brought with it no disease. Every morning we awoke into a New world because our hearts were pure. That existence was rapture, the memory of which might almost touch some of us to tears; so changed are we now.

What a rapture it was to us, when for the first time we saw the snowdrop push its way to the light, and watch the mountain's-top grow blue on the horizon; and at every new discovery, the old world to us, became a new world. Almost every hour brought its mystery, and every mystery its curiosity, and every curiosity its effort, and every effort its discovery in which we had the most exulting pleasure; the slightest things were of surpassing interest and the interest lasted long, and was ever around them. What wonderful fancies did not our imagination conceive. A broken knife lying in a field; a

sailor's hat cast up at our feet by the waves on the sea shore ; around such common things as these what romances did not our busy fancy weave. Voices came to us as we sat or slept alone until we seemed to have other friends and companions than those we knew. Visions of things beautiful, or dreadful, made our common walks thrill with excitement. We smiled, and we wept, we knew not why, or what kind of feeling was created. We inherited the earth ; we had a kingdom greater than any king's.

As we became a little older and became slightly conscious of the World of unawakened thought and feeling which lay within us, the powers of which to win a way for us we never doubted, then the world seemed 'inexhaustible. We thought every thing was ours, and to us there was no time ; it was life in eternity ; to us the present was sufficient ; and in this, so like to the existence of the Divine, the all-comprehending One, that it is no figure of speech to call the kingdom of the child, the kingdom of God. How rapidly, alas ! these feelings faded, as it were, in a single day ; we awoke and, lo ! they were gone, the place thereof was nowhere to be found. But, still exiled in our sterner manhood from its kingdom, we pay it visits when we can do so without too much pain, and in spite of the cherubim and the flaming sword which waves before its gates, we penetrate its glades and woods ; and it is not the Angel that drives us away from it ; it is our own thought which cannot bear it, and we are driven forth once more to tread amongst the thorns and thistles of the disenchanted earth. Nay more, there are times when we do more than visit it in our dreams ; times when we seem to see this practical life, as we call it, as the real dream ; when we awake, as it were out of a troubled vision, and find ourselves children once again, looking at things with the old rapture, the old freshness, the old curiosity ; and the old power of creativeness and then running through all of these experiences ; we are conscious of the strength and knowledge we have gained, and the moral greatness of the manhood or womanhood which has won much through the struggle, and which is made much more beautiful. It is, then, in these hours when we are children for the time and yet men—that we know that which we shall be in the perfect life, when we shall enter into that kingdom of God which is beyond this world—that we encompass part of the meaning of this, our text ; " Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein."

In all that we have said we have not dwelt on the life of childhood as a symbol of religious life, in this world ; but as a symbol of the joyful life which we shall inherit hereafter. We have not represented the child as devotional, or loving, or

enjoying the world, or loving God, or even conscious of His existence. When we look back we can realize that this is the way we lived, although at the time we were perhaps not conscious of it. *A child is not and ought not to be conscious of a deep religious feeling.* A child in its relation to the world, and in its ignorance of time and danger, resembles, at a distance, the relation which we shall bear hereafter in the life to come to the World around us.

This, then, is the general view of our text; the view which we take from the side of the Religion of Nature. But we pass on to the closer meaning of it. The child's life is a symbol of the religious life of man here on earth. Before the Pharisees, full of religious pride, asserting their right to rule in the kingdom of God, thinking only of self; Christ held up in his arms a little child, and spoke the words of our text. It was a profound reproof if they could have received it as such; for they in every feeling differed from a child; for the element in the child's heart resembles the elements of the religious heart, though the child itself is not religious.

Religion is the conscience; and to be religious is to be conscious of God; conscious of our communion with Him; conscious of our moral struggle to reach His perfection. A child is conscious of none of these things. Some of the elements of this consciousness of God are wonder, delight, trust, reverence, love, unconsciousness, obedience, and their necessary companions. These are the elements a man ought to be possessed of, and on two of them we shall dwell to-day. "But how can I possess these elements?" some one may ask; wonder has gone away from me; faith and trust have been worn off; of veneration I have none left; of perfect obedience—well—I do not mean to obey—I am my own master. *No, that is not true;* though that is the position in which you choose to place yourself towards your God. It is *not* the position you take with regard to other matters in which you care to excel, and in proportion as you do assume this boasted position, is your life wasted; and in proportion as you do not assume this position, is your life valuable. The temper, for example, of a true heart towards nature resembles the temper of a child in wonder of the beauty which renews itself day by day. He walks in this world in perfect trust; his reverence for it passes into worship; he gives half a life to learn its laws, and the labour of the other half to obey them; and in his obedience he finds peace. But why stop short there; why should he not take the temper of the child into the realm of religion and try what it will do for him then. Like a little child he has entered into the kingdom of Science and possessed it. He need only change the object while he keeps the spirit to enter into the kingdom of God.

In what kind of temper does the wise man consider the things which belong to the Physical kingdom? Does it not resemble the temper of a true child? Christ's words are true in this case also; for whosoever shall not approach the kingdom of science as a little child, shall in nowise enter therein. Trust in nature, curiosity to know her meaning, love of her and willingness to wait upon her steps, reverence for her majesty, delight in all she does, unconsciousness of self, pursuit of her, obedience to her laws, and working within their limits. All these things, what are they? They are the elements of a child-like heart. And why not take them further? Why not use them, as keys to unlock—if you care about it—the mysteries of the Spiritual world? Change the object, *but not the principle* of your work, and you will enter the kingdom of God. It lies open to the child-like heart, and the natural philosopher may enter there as he enters into the realm of science, and by the same path.

And now with regard to those two elements; with regard to love and trust which belong to the child, and the sort of things they are, and how they are most like the love and trust we should bear to God, leaving to some other time such subjects as Reverence and Obedience.

The love which is awakened in children is the result of tender care on the part of the parents, of long continued, minute and watchful care. It is not a very deep love; for the deepest love is made of myriads of threads and woven together in the closest web, by the work and thought and feeling of many years. Neither does it possess the rapture and ecstasy which come with the passions some time in after life. It is a quiet, natural, unconscious feeling, asking no questions of itself; undeformed by jealousy, unspoiled by the ebb and flow, the action and re-action, of passion. It is the air the child breathes, and though it would die were it removed, it does not think about it. And this is the love we should bear to One whom we believe to be our Father, in Christ Jesus: a love which we do not seek to define lest we should spoil it, which has its roots in the unconscious gratitude which we give Him for His watchful care; which makes us happy we know not why; which keeps us from doing wrong, not because we are afraid of punishment, but because we do not like to grieve Him. It is without the storms of passion, but calm by reason of its being in the atmosphere of the Lord, and untroubled by any doubts. We love Him as flowers love the sun. This is the love that lasts the longest and bears the best, which is indeed astonished by punishment but never thinks of being angry with God for it, which cries aloud at times, but only clasps the closer, from its pain, to the Knees of God.

There is another kind of love like to this, a love of God which

is intensely self-conscious. It watches its own ebb and flow with a morbid fear and a morbid joy. It questions its own existence. It thrills continually with painful excitements. It demands much from God and exhausts itself to get more and more of His kingdom. It can neither let God nor itself alone. I do not say it is not a true affection; but it imports the passions, jealousy and anxiety, into the relationship of the child and the father, and it is subject, like earthly passion, to woeful re-action. It breaks down often under trials, since trials come often at the ebb, nay, it is sometimes stricken dead by the tempest. Well, do not seek its roads, but keep in the fresh air that blows across the meadows of your childhood. Love God as you loved your father and mother.

So far with regard to love. From such a love is born perfect trust. Of all things on earth and of all beautiful things, trustfulness is the most beautiful and the most rare. It is true it is hard to trust, if we have been often deceived; but when we find it in a friend, or lover, it charms us as nothing else can charm us; and it has a reflecting influence; *it keeps us true; for there is no baseness so great as its betrayal.* In happy childhood we have this beauty continually before us and around us. It is natural to the child, who has had no experience of treachery; and it strengthens our love and makes it new; and those who requite, with cruelty and rejection, the trust of a child who looks up to them for protection *must* have worthless hearts. Watch a child with its parents; wherever they are it is at home. It plays, it lives in their shadows, which is its shelter. It imparts its most trivial joys to them. It has not a shade of doubt of them. It abides upon their word as upon the truth itself; and on the slightest ailment or pain it runs to them secure of sympathy. Its trust is strong. It takes much and long sustained falsehood to kill the trust of a child. Its trust gives it that deep rest which enables it to remove all fear, to refer all difficulties to another. It knows that it will be checked when it goes too far, or is in the wrong, and it gives itself up to enjoyment, without trouble. Is not its life, and is not the direction of its life, in higher hands than its own? Not that it reasons all this, or is conscious of it; it feels it, but it does not ask why. That is the picture of what trust of the religious man in God is, and what it ought to be. Only man does reason upon it, and he knows and is conscious on whom he trusts, and why. Such a man is at home in all the world, in every business, in the busy city, and in the loneliest hour upon the hills, for he knows that God is with him and that his life is in the hollow of His hand. There is nothing too trivial to ask his Father, no sympathy too great to demand of Him. He may have doubts about theology and of earthly things, but he never doubts the

love and goodness of God to him. He may get into trouble and see no way out of it, but he never thinks that God has deserted him. He does wrong, and is miserable, but his misery does not hurry him away from God with fear, but draws him home trembling and weeping, but certain of forgiveness; and so it comes to pass that he has the rest that remaineth even here, and the peace which Christ left with the children of His Father. For his life, he knows, is in other hands than his own, in wiser and gentler hands, and he can take the world as it comes and enjoy it and do his work and be cheerful; knowing that when he slips into folly or into sin, he will be told of it at once, by One who ever watches over and guides him in his walk. He reposes without a shadow of a doubt on the faithfulness of God; and God repays this trust of his child. And how does He repay it? He repays it by His pleasure in it. In this also, the resemblance to the natural trust of the child holds good. The exquisite charm we are subject to, when we are trusted by our children is the truest image of God's delight in our trust in Him. We do not want for those spiritual things, or for those feelings which belong to the heart, any other reward than the pleasure we derive from them. That is more than sufficient. To trust is its own reward. But beyond this, the consciousness of our trust gives a delight to those we trust in. It deepens our desire to please; it deepens our desire to preserve pure from blemish, pure from disloyalty the trust which has been established. And these things we may feel towards God. He has delight in our child-like trust. A new touch of colour can thereby be given to our eternal joy; and the poorest outcast and the weakest sufferer may think, without irreverence, that by his child-like, trust in God, he increases the joy of God. It is a thought which glorifies the christian's life. A thought which makes our relationship to our Heavenly Father, holier and dearer. It makes us conscious of that reciprocation of pleasure without which no bond of love is perfect.

So far for trust. On the whole—for we leave the rest for another time—do you want the key to a religious life? It lies ready to your hand; in your own heart. The word of God is very nigh to those who have ears to hear. In the common relation of a child to a parent, and of a parent to a child, is the image of our relationship to God, and God's relationship to us. In the ordinary life of children is the image of the Spirit of the kingdom of God. In the common, natural, quiet love and trust of a child, such as can be seen in any happy home, we are furnished with an example of the best kind of love, and trust that we can bear to God. These feelings do not rise to any wild or extravagant extent. The Alpine realm of Religious emotion is as unfit for everyday religious life as the Alpine realm of

Religious thought. It may be well to visit it, and to get into the third heaven now and then, and feel the unspeakable things which belong to love, and trust. But the religious trust that will bear the wear and tear of life best, is the simple, quiet, humble employment in familiar matters of the day. The older one gets, the more one leaves the emotions of religion behind. In youth, not in childhood, we wish to make great sacrifices for the love of God, but when we get something of the child back in after years, we are better pleased to love God for the simple pleasure of loving Him. In youth we wish to display our trust; but trust is the loveliest, and most soothes the heart when we give up our lives into the hands of God and say "Thou knowest what is best for me." If we combine the life and thought of manhood with the spirit of a child, in matters of religion, however bleak and dreary our path may be; however full of sorrow, pain, and weariness our life may appear, a voice will come to us and say continually "Child, be comforted;" and looking up we shall behold the Face of God. Then, as life draws near to a close, and the worn out man decays, the true childhood *which is ever in us* shall arise and begin to spread its wings; the soul, like the tree, to feel new life running through its veins, and to swell, like the buds, leaves and blossoms with uncomprehended but fresh emotions. It is getting ready for the festival of spring. Childhood is coming back again and all that is sweet, pure, and creative in childhood, all that loves simply, and trusts faithfully, mingles with the manly wisdom, manly energy, and manly adoration. One short and bitter struggle is before us; the passage of Death; but that being over, we let slip the worn out garment, and we stand as a child before the doors of Heaven and before the Eyes of Christ, who then, as of old, will take us in His arms, and we shall hear His words, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."



A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT HON. AND RIGHT REV. THE

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

(JOHN JACKSON, D.D.)

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 1872.

"If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin."—Romans viii, 10.

It is a lesson learnt sadly enough from even the most charitable observation of the world around us, but taught yet more painfully by the experience of our own past history, that the scriptural *theory* or ideal of Religion is very far indeed from being realized in fact; that the Church and its individual members are at the best but faint and imperfect copies of the examples depicted in Scripture; that the pure light of God's Word and Will is refracted as it passes into the medium of fallen human nature; that what we ought to be, according to the terms and descriptions of the gospel, is one thing; that what we are, in our perverse or feeble practice, is another.

Nowhere, perhaps is this contrast more distinct, than in view of what in Scripture is called "the flesh." That is to say, the appetites, passions and pleasures which in the state of man's innocency, helped to diffuse a healthy calm through the whole moral being; but which, in fallen man, broken loose from the supreme sway of the controlling conscience, fostered to undue force, exerted upon unbecoming objects, indulged in to an inordinate degree, and stimulated into the ways of evil by weak and culpable submission to temptation, become the parents of sin, the tyrants of the soul, the spoilers of the true and inner life and the forgers of those chains, by which more than by any other means, the Devil binds men captive to His will.

The mission of the Saviour was to repair the damage of the Fall, and to restore man not only to the happiness he had forfeited, but to the Image of God he had lost. Therefore it was that Christ became Perfect Man, and it was as *man*, and for man, that He died, to overcome by obedience as well as expiate by His sufferings and sacrifice, every sin by which fallen man had disgraced himself. It was of no use for Death to try to

destroy Him who had the power of death. He dwelt in the flesh and took part even in tasting of the temptations of the *flesh*, as well as atoned for the guilt which sinful flesh was answerable for. No gnawings of hunger, could impel Him to command the stones to become bread; no tone of silvery softness could seduce Him to fall down and worship the Arch-tempter. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not." On the contrary, "He wept over the foreseen sufferings of His enemies." His vengeance on His murderers was a prayer for their forgiveness; and when His human nature shuddered under the consciousness of the bitterness of that cup He had to drink to the dregs, and even when His bodily frame was borne down beneath the burden He had to bear, His submissive Spirit terminated the great conflict in which the flesh was vanquished for ever, simply with these words, "Nevertheless not My will but Thy will be done." Thenceforth the believer in Jesus Christ is gifted with power to overcome the flesh, and he is urged to overcome it by the most solemn and constraining motives. Let us view this position in the various lights in which the gospel places it.

In the first place, the believer having been made one with Christ, has died with Christ to sin, and risen with Him to a new life of holiness. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

By virtue of his union with Christ, the Christian is enabled to view himself as having passed from that state of being, in which the lusts of the flesh and the works of the flesh were tyrants to his soul, into a new resurrection of life, in which, being in Christ, he is made a new creature. The chains of his slavery have fallen off; the dominion of appetite and passion is over; all that belonged to another state of things entirely, to the sad and hated memory of the past. He is now a free man, compelled to yield up those members which were formerly the servants of uncleanness to be the servants of righteousness and holiness. I am not now speaking of what is, but what ought to be. To the sad reverse of the picture we must turn hereafter; the sad difference between what God would have us to be, and what He meant us to be, and what we are. It is true that he who is dead with Christ is also alive with Him, and sin hath no more dominion over him. But not Christ's death only but the mode of His death has its realization and counterpart for those who are one with Christ. "He humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross;" and they who are Christ's, "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

This truth supplies an important feature in the Scripture portraiture of the Christian's relation to the flesh. It is dead—that flesh, but it had to be crucified. It has been a work of long suffering and severe self-denial; of sharp pangs from hungry and unsatisfied appetites; of weary watchings against temptations; of foreseen thirstings after sin that could not be assuaged; of tears, and cries, and prayers; of darkness in the soul perhaps, and terror lest God had forsaken you. But it is done. The flesh is crucified with its affections and lusts. It hangs upon the cross of Christ dead by virtue of His death. No more, is this a dream of philosophy aspiring after a virtue it cannot reach. It is at once a privilege and a duty that must be done. The death of Christ in its relation to those who are Christ's is not a *motive* and an *example* merely, but a *power*, and they who are one with Christ, or have really accepted Christ are enabled as well as bound to crucify the flesh and rise to a new life of purity and holiness. This is the enabling power of the Holy Spirit by which Christ dwells with His people, and His people are in union with Him. "It is expedient," He says, "that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you."

It is to be remembered that this real indwelling of Christ by the Holy Ghost in the whole man of his disciples, is not a special privilege granted only to long-tried and enduring saints who have grown by degrees up to the full measure and stature of Christ's people; but is promised to *all*, though they be very babes in Christ. This is an essential for Christians, the pledge of our justification and adoption, the earnest of our happiness in heaven. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" "Ye are the temple of the living God." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." These are solemn truths, and may well carry our minds away at different times in different directions; sometimes to anxious searchings of the heart, to strugglings and prayer, and resolutions for the future; at other times to cheering thoughts, to high hopes, to trusting faith, and to the realization of the love which passeth knowledge.

Observe at present, that we are walking in the sins of the flesh, and the dark shadow of them is upon us. We are members of Christ's mystical Body and that Body we defile by the filthiness of the flesh. We are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and we pollute the shrine, outrage the spirit of the Holy One, by indulgence in the works of the flesh. I dare not speak more

plainly about these things in this place; but no tongue can speak more forcibly than that of the Apostle Paul. Would that his words might sound in the ear, or haunt the memory when the temptation is burning in the veins, or the wine cup sparkling at the lip, or the false mirth of the revel waxing wild, or the soft sweet voice of temptation stealing away the soul, "Know ye not," he asks, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What! know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith He shall be one flesh, but he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication.—Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have from God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

But while these solemn truths deepen the guilt and danger of the sins of the flesh, they are at the same time—hereby aggravating the guilt of indulgence—assurances of deliverance from those sins, if we will. In the case of all sins it is a most subtle device of Satan, and a most successful one to suggest to his victim, that the particular temptation he is employing is of an exceptional character; that flesh and blood cannot resist it; and that the almost *necessity* of complying will excuse compliance. Never is that suggestion more dangerous than when the temptation is offered to the lusts of the flesh. The suggestion is that He who gave us appetites so strong, and bound them up in our very nature, will not be severe upon us for indulging them in these exceptional circumstances, when weak natures like ours cannot be expected to stand. So Satan tempts; and, as ever, *with a lie*.

There are no temptations, save such as are wilfully sought, which Christians may not overcome if they will. Members of Christ have a source of strength within them; and with Him in their hearts they may repel the suggestions of evil, and repress each emotion of their corrupt natures.

In sketching the ideal of the Christian's relation to the flesh, I must not pass over, though I can only briefly indicate, the alteration effected by the Holy Spirit in this body of ours, the natural state of which is the instrument and cause of many of the sins of the flesh. No longer, a prison house of the soul longing to get free; no longer a decaying tabernacle, to be folded up after life's journey; no mere worthless instrument to be cast aside like a spent lamp or a broken lyre, when the light is extinguished or the strain is played out; it has been ennobled

by the Incarnation of the Son of God, sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and after its brief sleep in its native dust, it shall be roused by the blast of the archangel's trumpet and "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible; for this corruptible must put on incorruption." *It rises either to an eternity of glory, or to an eternity of condemnation. There is no transition state for the flesh after death.* Steeped to the lips though it may be in guilt, it may be cleansed and its sins washed away by the tears of penitence, and the blood of the Lamb; *but if not*, the foul stains will still remain upon the risen body, loathsome alike to its owner and to the angels who witness it. What a constraining motive against the sins of the flesh, and what an answer to its temptations, is the belief that this body which Christ has redeemed, and which has been set apart as the temple of the Holy Ghost, is to be, by virtue of that indwelling, the partaker, and even the instrument of the happiness and holiness of heaven! Or, in the Apostle's words, that "the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you."

Such then, by the light of the gospel, is the ideal of the Believer's position with regard to the flesh. Being made one in Christ who overcame the flesh for us, he is armed against its temptations, and freed from its power by the indwelling of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit in his body which is God's. That body is to be raised in Christ, and to be made like unto His glorious body. Such is the ideal; but what is the fact? Take even the characters of God's saints as they are portrayed in His holy Word for our imitation, that ideal has never been wholly realized. We read of the flesh lusting against the Spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would do; of their groaning within themselves and waiting for the adoption and redemption of the body. We hear the bitter cry "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" till it is stilled by the answer of faith, "I thank God through Jesus Christ who died for me."

I will not stay to ask how this ideal is realized in the world around us, or to dwell on the glaring contrast between the theory of the Gospel and the facts which meet us daily in society. The general tone of conversation, the revelations in our courts of justice, the aspect of our streets, the presence of that ceaseless stream of impurity, which carries thousands through a life of infamy to an early and despairing grave; the enmity, the detraction, the evil speaking, the hatred, the suspicions, (not only in secular matters; but more melancholy still in the Name, it is said, and for the cause of the Gospel of Peace) these I do not pause to go into; but will simply ask, "How is it with

us? Is the mortification of the flesh by the indwelling of Christ, a *fact* with us or not? Are we, or are we not set free from the sins of the flesh?

The answers must be given by each one's conscience. There may be those (God grant there may be many) who by God's special mercy have kept themselves, in the main, pure from all filthiness of the flesh, and whose baptismal robes are still white. There are those, I dare assert by whom the Lord Jesus Christ has been accepted, not in theory only, but in reality; who, believing that they have been made one with God, hold fast that union as a living faith, clinging to Christ as their Saviour, keeping Him always in their thoughts, attributing to Him their victories and their escape.

But is this so with all of us, or with most of us? Are there not many whose consciences are crying, though their lips are unwilling to utter the words, "Unclean, unclean?" Some there be, indeed, whose sins of unchastity, of drunkenness, of anger, of revenge, have scarcely sought secrecy, or at any rate have not attained it. There are wretched men who have gloried in sin, others who have gratified their passions and tempers at times, and in ways known only to themselves and to God. Others there are who from prudence, or from want of opportunity, have been restrained from the acting out of the lusts of the flesh, but who know they have been very guilty in their thoughts, defiling themselves and displeasing God every day. Others, still, there are who have become sensible of the tyranny of the flesh, who have struggled with its thoughts and habits of impurity, and who have resolved to indulge in them no more. Others again go on treading the same weary round of good resolutions broken, and of sins alternately hated and committed. And why is this? Why this wide contrast between the ideal and purpose of the gospel and reality? Why has the flesh still dominion in those who being Christ's are buried with Him, and buried to arise to a new life; who should have crucified the flesh upon His cross; who are members of Christ, and set apart to be temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore both bound and enabled to overcome the flesh? Is it not, because you have never yet conscientiously accepted Christ, and that, therefore, you have never yet realized your union with Him?

In pressing this question upon you I am not disparaging the Baptism you have received, or the Sacraments which you have perhaps taken. By the one you were grafted into Christ, by the other, in eating His flesh and drinking His blood, you are one with Christ, and He is one with you. But I should disparage those Sacraments if I ventured to say that either of them would prevail to keep us in true and living union with Christ without the exercise of that true, living, personal *faith* by which Christ

is accepted by the individual soul as its Saviour, and its strength.

And now cast your memory back over your inner history. Question yourselves at this present moment. Have you ever learnt either by the sad teachings of experience, by some shameful fall, by some shafts of God's word sent home to the conscience, or by some sickness or trouble that has dispelled for a moment the glare and haze of sin; have you ever learnt, your feebleness as a moral agent, and your need of a Saviour to deliver you from deserved condemnation? Has your sense of sin ever deepened into true repentance? Have you ever felt a hatred of sin, not for its consequences only, *but for itself*; not because it makes you wretched, but because it offends God; not a transient disgust, but a turning away from sin with a persevering resolve to use your best-efforts for a new life? Have you ever looked through your tears of penitence to the Cross, and there recognized hesitatingly perhaps at first, the remedy for your soul's disease? Have you ever opened your heart to receive the Saviour with all the fullness of His love, and all the power of His grace? Have you ever received His promises and treasured them up, resolved never again to let them go? Have you ever laid to heart the words of eternal life, and have you determined to learn more and more of the foundation of your happiness, the model of your life, and the hope of your salvation—Jesus Christ, and Him crucified? Have you looked to Him as your Prophet to imitate His example, as your Priest to trust to His advocacy; as your Saviour to rely upon His atonement? Have you sought to know His intentions and determined to obey Him, and to live securely under Him as your King?

If not, if Christ be not in you, no wonder that the flesh has still dominion over you. You have not realized your union with Christ, nor claimed as your own those powers of the new covenant which alone can set you free. You have not yet come to Him, and therefore He has not made you free. But why do you continue in a bondage against which your better mind revolts, and of which the wages is death? He is waiting to be gracious; He is inviting you to come to Him with that weary, sin-burdened soul of yours, that He might give you rest. He is pleading with you by His warnings, by His providence, by His word, by His ministers, and by that still small voice within you which you have each heard at times, and which many of you may be hearing now. "Behold," He says in a voice of Divine, long-suffering love, unwearied by man's wilful and continued disobedience, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in."

When the Lord Jesus Christ is thus accepted; when the soul has conscientiously closed with His offers, and thrown itself as it

were into the arms of His mercy, there is a growth of love for Christ, and for the Father reconciled through Him. The love of Christ constraineth us to love no longer ourselves, but Him who died for us and rose again; and a new and gradual influence warms and invigorates the whole moral being. A newer and truer sense is also arrived at, of the guilt and deformity of the sins of the flesh. These when committed by Christians, crucify Christ afresh as it were, and put Him to new shame. They stain the baptismal robe; they take the "members of Christ," and make them "members of an harlot;" they defile the temple of the Holy Ghost, and affront Him who dwells therein. Men may smile at them here, and excuse them, but those sins will rise with the bodies in which they were done, to witness against us before the Judgment seat of Christ. Of all sins, the sins of the flesh require the most watching against, the most striving against, the most fervent and resolute praying against. The body is kept under and brought into subjection lest they who have accepted Christ, and been accepted by Him, should again be led captive by their lusts, be overmastered, betrayed, and become castaways.

But above all, when the soul has thus consciously and truly accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, the privileges and effects of our union with Him are no longer an ideal and a theory merely, but a reality, and a power. We were joined to Him in our baptism, and we now rise to a newness of life. Our bodies and souls together are temples of the Holy Ghost, He dwells in us, and where He inhabits He purifies and sanctifies, and therefore sin shall have no more dominion over us. The flesh is vanquished for us if we will. I say not that it is a bloodless conquest, or an easy victory; I say not that there is no race to run, and no conflict to wage; but I say that the conflict is with a beaten foe, and that the golden crowns are already prepared for those who strive faithfully. "Walk therefore in the Spirit that ye fulfil not the lusts of the flesh," and remember that "if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive because of righteousness."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 13.]

A Sermon

BY

THE RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF HEREFORD,

(JAMES ATLAY, D.D.)

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1872.

And the Lord said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh; yet, his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."—Genesis vi, 3.

There can be no reasonable doubt I think, that the words of this text admit of a two-fold interpretation. I can understand them, I mean, as spoken either in sorrowful compassion, or in angry indignation; but in either sense, if I mistake not, they will suggest to us some very serious reflections. Let me substantiate my opinion.

Are they the words of pity? Then I seem to hear the voice of Him that delighteth in mercy, and whose strange work it is to grieve and afflict the children of men. I seem to hear Him say, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wrath, for the spirits shall fail before me, and the souls that I have made. The contest between us is not on equal terms. Man is but flesh, and shall he be able to stand against Me—the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity? My Spirit, therefore, shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh. He also, even though of divine origin, and formed in the image of God,

even he is but flesh, and obeys the motions and leadings of the flesh, though it be to his own sad hindrance and decay. I will not, therefore, at once enter into judgment with him, and contend with him. He shall have time given him to come to a better frame of mind. His days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

That would be a perfectly intelligible declaration if we thus regard the words spoken in mercy, and in pity, by One who would fain be remembered as One who is not extremely desirous to mark for His wrath everything that weak flesh and blood does amiss, because He knows that man could not abide it.

But it is equally clear that the text may also express the righteous indignation of the speaker, and His determination to vindicate His outraged majesty. And, I confess, I am afraid that the connection in which the words occur, make this the more probable explanation of the two. Some fifteen hundred years, perhaps had elapsed, since the day when the Maker of all things had looked upon all things He had made, and "Behold it was very good."

It was a fair world and a happy world, answering to His great idea of its creation ; but now the face of all things was changed. Men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and with man came sin. God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and He repented already that He had made man, and it grieved Him to the heart. And it is as an expression of this grief in God's heart that I think we must consider the text is spoken. The Lord said, " My spirit shall not always strive with man ; he has been wayward of old, and I have pitied him ; he has been ungrateful, and I have forgiven him ; he has been high-minded, and I have borne with him ; he was discontented, and I humoured him as a peevish child ; he has sought out my intentions, and I have given play to his imagination ; I found him in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness and I led him about and instructed and kept him as the apple of my eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, and spreadeth her wings over them, even so have I done for the race of man. But he has forsaken me, the God that made him. And is this to last for ever ? Is my spirit always to strive with man, flesh as he is, and grown big and covered with fatness ? He is joined to idols ; I will let him alone.

CHURCH SERMONS.

This is the deduction, my Christian brethren, which I think I have a right to draw from the text—that God is indeed merciful, and long-suffering ; that He strives with man in many ways by the working of His blessed Spirit within him, by the working of his own conscience, by various warnings from without, constantly strewn in our paths ; but if we despise the riches of His goodness, His forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance ; if we will grieve the Holy Spirit of God and resist Him, then He will not always strive with us, but will give us over to a reprobate mind. And is not this possibility awful indeed to contemplate ? It would be well I think in the first instance to fortify ourselves by a thankful remembrance of the great mercy of God that He has consented to strive with man at all. And upon this point I now proceed to enlarge.

Look at the description given in the text, of our race. “He also is flesh.” I am not going to indulge in any general declamation against the sins and sinfulness of human nature. The Scripture seems to leave the question of the degree of human corruption undetermined, and I may do the same. That it is very great, no man who knows his own heart can have any hesitation in admitting ; but it was the practice of St. Paul when he wanted to humble his disciples, to appeal to their recollection of the evil they had themselves done, rather than to the evil they had inherited. The former they could not but feel to be their fault, whereas the latter they might be tempted to fancy was their misfortune. There is every reason why a teacher in these days, should be very careful indeed how he thinks or speaks. The simple-hearted Christian who has grace given him to believe and trust in the word of God, may perhaps wonder at the caution I am hinting at ; but there are many professing Christians at the present day, who hold very strong notions upon points which have, from time to time in former days, been discussed and disputed, but upon which, until lately, a discreet, if not a reverent silence has generally been observed. It is not an uncommon thing in these days to find Doctrines questioned, and Unbelief avowed, where, within the memory of many of you, such would have been believed impossible. And this is especially the case with respect to the question of sin, and its nature—of evil, and its origin—of the state in which the world is actually placed by it, and the like. It is very needful, therefore, that a teacher in

the present day should walk with his soul in his hand, as it were, when he has to speak upon topics such as that now before me. It is the wise caution given by a well-known writer that "It never can be well to unduly exalt one part of the system at the expense of another ; to magnify the mercies of the Redemption, too great themselves to need exaggeration, by sinking the subject of that Redemption below the brutes, and holding up to him as the reflection of himself, an image from which he instinctively recoils as a hideous caricature." But after every allowance for the ignorance of men, and that knowledge of right and wrong, which they have, or seem to have by the light of their natural understanding, it is impossible not to acknowledge that it would be vain to search through all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam, to find one man who has done one action that has passed from him pure, and without one stain or blemish at all. Alas ! we are but flesh, and that you must remember not merely in the sense of being weak, frail, perishable beings, living and flourishing to-day, but to-morrow cast into the earth, made subject to decay, and continually decaying by the process of nature ; day by day exposed to the ills that flesh is heir to, day by day decaying and vanishing away, but in a very different meaning. With respect to the things of the flesh, our condition is such that we are not able to turn and prepare ourselves by our own good works for the high calling of God ; the lusts of the flesh (whether you expound that phrase to apply to the wisdom, the sensuality, or the affections, or the desires of the flesh) not being subject to the law of God.

Is there a single man in this vast congregation to night, who is not painfully sensible of his unhappy condition, though we would fain wish and honestly desire it were otherwise ? If it were not for that wrench, which the soul of man suffered at the fall of Adam—the effect of which has descended through every generation since—if it were not for that fall and that corruption of our nature, how are we to account for numberless facts in our lives, which it is utterly impossible to deny or explain away ? How are we to account for the unvarying language of Scripture, unless we give it up or explain it away altogether ? Was St. Paul speaking in a figure, do you think, when he wrote that part of the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, or is he speaking of the natural man, the type of that which my text calls "flesh" ? You cannot have any doubt about the answer

which must be given to such a question. It is indeed a terrible picture that he draws. Sin rises up before us as an armed enemy ; no mere abstraction, but a living, acting, person, who with measured deliberation, takes possession of certain strongholds in our nature, of which he makes sallyports from which to attack us. St. Paul tells us that by sin our nature has become abased in itself. It was originally holy, just, and pure ; but by sin it has become what it is, a means of injuring a man's soul, instead of remaining a fortress for his defence.

It was a severe struggle that was going on when he describes himself as "sold unto sin" ; it was a real dungeon in which he was immured, though the bolts and bars were invisible to human eye.

Is it not startling to hear him tell that, under the influence of his corrupt nature, he was carried away and became beside himself, all night haunted by a dreadful nightmare, unconscious of what he was really doing. "All that which I do I know not ; for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate that do I."

We pity—it is impossible to help pitying as we read her story—the famous character of old, whose reason was overpowered by her passions, and who tells us that she knew perfectly well all the while the nature of the crimes she was about to commit, but still was too weak to resist the temptation, being carried away in spite of herself to commit the most atrocious crimes. Yet even this heathen woman could declare she was the slave of passion, and deplore the tyranny of that monster to which her consciousness told her she was sold. It was her very misery to "see the right, and yet the wrong pursue." And can we fail to pity the Christian man, consumed by a fire within, and forced to cry out "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Can we forbear joining in his piteous exclamation, wrung from him by the consciousness of his helpless state "Oh ! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death for that I also am flesh ?"

My text, however, speaks very pointedly, you remember (as I have thought it safest to interpret it) of a power of resisting this flesh. God speaks of His spirit striving with man. Perhaps I might best illustrate this by another feature of St Paul's life, as exhibited in his letter to the Galatians, where he bids us walk

in the Spirit and thus be spared the wretchedness of fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. In strict accordance with the language of my text, he too knows from experience of the strife, between the spirit and the flesh. According to his experience, I say, for I deem it impossible for a man so to have written, except from his own consciousness of the state he is describing. According to him there is a perpetual warfare being waged between the flesh and the spirit. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit warreth against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other," in order that you may not always allow the bent of your own inclination to do things that your nature would lead you to do. The things that you would do, those things you are not always forced to do. If this be the true interpretation of the Apostle's words, surely we may take great encouragement from them; indeed, they seem to be in exact agreement with the inference I am anxious to draw from my text. One promise is, that God's blessed spirit will strive with man; though not for ever. The other declares that the spirit warreth against the flesh, lest poor weak man should be always worsted in the conflict.

Brethren, I know you not according to the flesh. I am come from a distant part of England to speak to you this evening. I cannot have that individual knowledge of your case which a parish priest not seldom possesses, of the various members of his flock. Nevertheless I dare appeal to the hearts of my hearers, whether there is a touch of exaggeration in the Apostle's language; whether the contest is not still going on within the walls of our own breasts? It is but too true that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit. It is no less true, however, that the Spirit warreth against the flesh. Take any temptation, by which your own conscience only too sadly bears witness, you are liable to be overcome; in your sober thinking mood, when your heart retires to commune with God and (for a moment at any rate) all noisy thoughts are hushed and still, you remember when that temptation assailed you last, and you confessed with real heart-felt shame and indignation that in spite of all your resolution, and in spite of all the reasons, you had drawn from the armoury of God's word; you had drawn yourself away from the means of grace and your better self, you were not able to resist temptation, and so you fell. The wave was too strong for you and swept you away. But there was a real struggle on your part against the enemy. You did not give way intentionally; on the contrary

it grieved you sorely. The archers shot at you, and hit you. The arrow of temptation has occasionally, and alas ! too often, found its way through the joints of your harness, and you bowed as one that is dead before it. There can be no doubt that in such cases the flesh is lusting against the Spirit, in order to prevent our doing the little good even that we would wish. And I know of no more powerful consideration to keep a man humbly at the foot of the Cross, than the recollection of the defeats he has from time to time, sustained in this warfare ; the knowledge of the truth, that the flesh within him is so strong that it is actually powerful enough to prevent him doing the thing he would, and which his better self tells him he ought to do. It will struggle with his pride and bring down everything in him that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, in order to prevent me doing that which I would ; but so, on the other hand does the Spirit war against the flesh, and prevents my doing always that I would like to do. "How comes it," says the man who comes to think of his own real case "that I could ever resist the temptation that besets me ? How is it that I can ever quench the fiery darts of the wicked ? When Apollyon comes throwing darts as thick as hail, what makes me ever able to resist him, so that I am able to cry out ' Rejoice not against me, Oh ! mine enemy, when I fall I shall rise ? ' "

There is but one answer to that question that I can think of ; "The Spirit warreth against the flesh. God's spirit strives with man, and therefore, I am not always carried away captive by my own will. There are times when I am marvellously preserved from doing the things I would like. An unseen arm upholds me that I stumble not, an invisible hand guides me that I should not injure myself, an unseen friend refreshes me, an unseen spirit whispers to my heart that I am not forgotten of God, and that at this time I am more than conqueror in the battle that rages against me."

Surely I am not using any fanciful or exaggerating language in this. Surely there are many of you who recognise the truth of what I say, and if I now speak comfortably to you, it is because I am speaking to your hearts. One person may perhaps say to himself or herself, "Time was when I was the slave of such and such a sin, of such and such a bad habit ; but by the grace of God, that time has gone by. I have escaped out of the snare of the fowler and my soul can now fly through the

clear air up to the Throne of God. Time was when I thought but little of the Eternal verities, when the most awful of all truths and possible contingencies, weighed but little with me or made the faintest of all impressions on my mind. I knew, indeed, for I had often heard of the future state which is in store for the souls of all mankind ; I knew that upon my behaviour here depended my eternal condition hereafter ; I knew that this world was a place of probation for me, and that at the end of my days, or perhaps at the end of a very few days, He that is to come would appear, and that I must stand before Him and endure the searching scrutiny that He would exact ; I knew that my whole life was open before His eyes, and that there was no escape from His power ; but I only knew this as history. I only regarded it as applying to others. Its knowledge had no influence upon my life or conversation. I did not really believe in the value of my soul, or in the love of Him who died to redeem it ; but I am very different now. I am not sure indeed that I can tell when or how the change began in me, but I am a different person. One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Everything is different from what it used to be. I could once think carelessly of the most solemn things, and even speak lightly of the most holy names ; but now the love of Christ constraineth me. I look back with amazement on my former indifference to religion, and I would fain build my tabernacle on the mount with the three disciples of old, for I feel that it is good to be there." Flesh though you are, God's spirit has striven with you ; and " he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved."

I cannot attempt, my Christian brethren, even so much as hint at the many ways in which the blessed Spirit of God condescends to strive with man. There are diversities of operation, but it is the same God who worketh in all of them. Whatever may be the manifestation, it is given to man that he may profit thereby himself, and enable others to profit by it also. It is no doubt a very astonishing thing, that any man should be so blind to his own real good as in any way to put himself into a position to miss the blessing his more favoured brethren attain to. Who would not wish to be under that influence always ? Beware then ! and this must be the practical conclusion of my sermon. Beware of grieving or resisting ! beware most of all of quenching the Holy Spirit of God, unless you would prove

in your own case that God's Spirit will at some time "cease to strive."

Time was when you were all washed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, when the Spirit of God in answer to earnest prayer, moved upon the face of the waters, and you were born again of water and of the Spirit. Time was when you were sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption, and became an heir of salvation. Time was when you were confirmed by the same Holy Spirit of promise, and by your own act and deed came forward to receive strength from the Holy Ghost, the strengthener, and you devoutly and thankfully implored an increase in your soul of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit. Surely, my brethren, this was not all in vain.

Unconsciously at first, no doubt, but as you grew towards years of discretion, palpably and indisputably the Spirit of God strove with you, for you had received the "Spirit of adoption," whereby you could cry unto God as your Father; and even as a father pitieth his children, so did the Father of all mercies pity you, and strengthen you from time to time by His Holy Spirit in your inner man. Thus were your mortal bodies quickened and purged of sin, and you were able to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." That Spirit is still striving with you, and unless it be your own fault, it will continue to strive with you unto the end. I say unless by your own fault, for alas! it is possible that all this great love of God for you, all this tender compassion and watching over you for your good may be in vain, and the result is more awful than at this time, I have the heart fully to set before you.

Yet "his days shall be one hundred and twenty years," is the promise in my text to the antediluvian patriarch. There was one preacher of righteousness raised up at all events, raised up by the mercy of God to strive with men. One man there was who found grace in the eyes of God; one man who walked with God, and of whom the Holy One is pleased to say "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." And this man, God of His mercy, sent to strive with them, while His long-suffering waited. He sent him to proclaim to the men of that generation what was in store for the ungodly, who should grieve the Spirit of God. He told them there would be a day of retribution, and unless they left off their sins and turned to Him in true repentance, God's spirit would not always

strive with them, for that they also were flesh. And he went about his work with a faithful heart, and delivered his own soul. There were many, no doubt, who heard the message and heeded it not; many who heard it and believed it not; many who laughed at it outright, and cried "What will this babbler say? Where is the promise of His coming? What has become of the threatened visitation and promise of judgment, which was to sweep us away from off the earth?" But at the end it came! Until the very last night of the day which finished the 120 years man might have found a place for repentance. They might have opened their hearts to Him who was standing at the door knocking, and who was striving with them by His Spirit to the very last. But they would not, and so the flood came and swept them all away.

And these things have a meaning, a message, and a warning to us.

We are told that it is a blessed thing indeed to be warned beforehand, and to pay attention to the warning. And then what a blessed thing indeed to be assured that at present, at any rate, the Holy spirit has not taken its flight from amongst us; that many souls day by day are led by Him; happy souls, who know the Voice and follow it; who see the Hand that beckons them, and silently obey its guidance; happy souls whose ears awaken morning after morning, and listen for the faintest sign of His presence; desirous above all things to realize the feelings of that beloved one, who cried "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth!" Oh, my soul! come thou into their security, and into their assembly; then shall they grow from strength to strength until by God's good guidance, every one of them appeareth in Zion.

Some there are in our day, even as there were in the world before the flood, (God grant there may be none such among you to-night) of whom it cannot but be feared that the language of the text will literally apply to them. God's spirit will not always strive with them; or else what mean such words as these, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regardeth; but ye have set at nought all my counsels, and would none of my reproof. I also will leave you to your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and destruction cometh as a whirlwind. When distress and injuries cometh on you, then shall they call on me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord!" Let us turn then my fellow-sinners while there is yet time, and pray that the Lord will pour out His spirit upon us, and make known unto us His word.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. RICHARD WHITTINGTON, M.A.,

Rector of St. Peter's, Cornhill.

PREACHED AT GRAY'S INN CHAPEL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1872.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds."—2 Corinthians x, 4.

It is interesting, my brethren, to notice how every part of Holy Scripture seems to have its own special and distinctive imagery, and that often through the medium of that imagery very valuable instruction is conveyed. Every part of the Old Testament for instance, has its peculiar Oriental complexion and character; and through the imagery and figures employed, its Eastern origin may be clearly traced. In the New Testament however, the Apostolic writers adopt, in speaking to us, similitudes of a different character. We are here brought into contact with metaphors which shew very plainly that the writers were habitually acquainted with scenes and circumstances more nearly resembling those of our every day life. This is especially the case with the author of these Epistles to the Corinthians. St. Paul lived in the midst of the active scenes of Roman life, and amidst the stirring events of Roman history; hence his metaphors were derived from what was taking place around him, and thus the New Testament is rendered more intelligible to us than the Old.

I propose to-day to take what must only be a hurried glance at one particular group of them, namely, the military metaphors of the New Testament, and to shew you how largely St. Paul has drawn upon them for our instruction in his Epistles. It cannot be any cause for marvel, that this was a peculiar characteristic in the writings of St. Paul, when we remember how large a portion of his time was passed in contact or close association with Roman soldiers and Roman military events. He was a Roman citizen himself, and consequently a member of the greatest military nation of the world. We, in England at this time, can have no conception of the immense influence

exercised in St. Paul's days by the military power of Rome. It is not till we go abroad into countries like France, or Germany, or Russia, and witness the presence of troops in every street of every city in the kingdom that we can at all comprehend what it meant. To St. Paul these warlike symbols of Rome's military power would be constantly visible. In nearly all the places where he resided, barracks and soldiers would be familiar objects ; and wherever he travelled he would see troops going to or returning from their frequent expeditions ; escorting prisoners into captivity, or keeping guard over those who were in confinement. But more than that, I need hardly remind you that the main incidents of St. Paul's own life would necessarily keep constantly before his mind, his experience of Roman soldiery and military scenes. You remember how upon one occasion he was arrested by the Prætorian guard, and detained captive in the barracks until it was discovered who he was ; when he was removed from Antipas to Cæsarea, the central and principal military station of the government, where according to the custom in those days he, would no doubt, be chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier. Nor need I remind you of another occasion when he had a narrow escape of being killed by the merciless troops in order thus to prevent his escape. So again when he was handed over to the Prætorian guard, although he was allowed to live in his own house, it was only on condition of having a Roman soldier to live with him, and in all probability chained to him in the usual way. He was no doubt speaking of the chains on his wrists, when in writing to the Colossians, he says, "Remember my bonds." He makes a similar allusion when writing to the Ephesians, no doubt with reference to the soldier being chained to him. Is it surprising then that St. Paul should so often make use of military symbols and emblems ?

It is interesting to notice some of the instances in which he does so. In writing to the Romans he says "The night is far spent, the day is at hand ; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light ; let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness." Cannot you fancy, my brethren, that you can almost see St. Paul as he wrote those words, sitting down to the task wearied by hard work, partly at tent making, which he did for his subsistence, partly from his missionary labours, which would very likely often take him out at break of day just when the soldiers were changing guard ; the morning light shining brightly on their well polished armour, and perhaps noisy bands of revellers just going home from some of those scenes of rioting and debauchery, with which the inhabitants of the depraved city of Corinth were but too familiar ? With what force would those

words apply to the Corinthians ! With what solemn warning do they speak to us to-day, in this great city, where such scenes, alas ! are still only too common ! There is much force in that expression "Put on the armour of light," or as he has it in the second of Corinthians "the armour of righteousness," that is to say Spiritual armour, fitted for a contest with spiritual foes. He tells us also that we are to be armed upon the right hand and upon the left ; by which he no doubt means that we should be prepared for both the offensive and the defensive ; having both the sword and the shield. Oh ! my brethren, pray that you may not only be furnished with this Spiritual armour but that you may have grace given you to use it.

And this brings us to that grand description of the panoply of the Christian which you read in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might ; put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil ; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." All this armour however will be of no use to you, unless having put it on, you make up your mind to use it. *Simply knowing how to use it, will not save your soul.* The soldier of God must be prepared for a life of active struggling, keeping faithful and obedient unto the end. He must be an energetic actor and not a mere passive professor.

Another fearful reflection occurs too here ; how desitute is the condition of those, who have not this "whole armour of God !" Without it we are utterly defenceless in the presence of one deadly foe ; a foe not only of terrible power, but one gifted with a dreadful genius for stratagem. You have not to fight against flesh and blood recollect, but "against the wiles of the devil." I would have you bear that phrase particularly in mind, my brethren. It is not an open and manly warfare that He wages against you. His whole scheme is to deceive you, to overcome you by artifice. He never lets you see the sins he tempts you with in their true colours ; but dresses them up in all sorts of disguises, calls them by false names, and then but too often succeeds in entrapping the unwary.

St. Paul you observe in the commencement of his grand description says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against (or "overcome," which is the word in the margin) the wiles of the devil." This word "stand" however sets before us, at once, what is to be the true position and permanent attitude of the Christian soldier. We have a position given to us to hold, and we must *hold* it. It is not merely watching that will suffice, as people who stand watching a fray from afar off, but we must keep and hold our position by constant resistance, and unflinching determination, as our armies did in the fields of India, at Waterloo, and still more recently in the glorious stand they made at Inkermann. It is not however merely winning the battle. The Apostle evidently means us to understand that after having done all this, we must still stand firm and watchful; and St. Chrysostom very aptly reminds us, that in ordinary warfare those who are struck, but not killed, may revive and attack us again. One great principle in all military tactics is learning to stand firm; and in common athletic exercises that is the first lesson impressed upon the pupil's mind, to acquire the habit of standing firm. Much more, therefore, than in these matters must those who enter the army of God be prepared to stand firm. The profligate cannot stand upright long; they stoop, and very soon fall.

Having said so much upon the proper attitude and posture of the Christian warrior, let us now pass on to the armour itself, as described by the Apostle. It consists of six pieces, the first being the belt—"having your loins girt about with truth." You must not suppose that this phrase refers to an ordinary girdle, but to a strong band of leather covered with iron plates, which was worn by Roman soldiers and gladiators, and of which one important use was to assist the wearers to stand firm. Need I say that that is exactly what Truth is said to be valuable for.

The next thing we come to is the breastplate—"and having on the breastplate of righteousness." That is to say being protected by that rectitude of character and holiness of purpose, which are essential to the true Christian life. If this be so, how solemn is the warning delivered to each of us to strive more and more after that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Furthermore, the soldier of Christ is to be well shod, which is a very important matter in an army—"And having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace." The object of St. Paul in using this figure of speech here, would seem to be to contrast the general usefulness and activity of the well shod soldier of the Cross, ready at all times to march against the foe, with the slow and laboured movements of those, who are

maimed and crippled, through not being "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace."

The next piece of bodily armour the Apostle mentions is the "helmet of salvation." Now this, in the Roman armies, was the most showy part of all the soldiers' armour, and as a protection for the head, doubtless most important. We might however, have had some difficulty about the exact meaning of the Apostle, had he not again referred to it in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, where he terms the helmet—"the hope of salvation;" and as the helmet is one of the most important parts of a soldier's armour in earthly warfare, so is this helmet of the hope of salvation to the Christian warrior; and, wearing that, you and I can fight manfully our fight of faith. "Oh may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

The next thing we have presented to us, is the "Shield of faith;" by which we are to understand that Faith like one of the ancient Roman shields, is above all and over all. The great Roman shield here symbolized by the Apostle, was no mere trifle worn upon the arm like those of later times, but a large shield that covered the whole body, so that if there were any weak places or deficiencies in the armour, the ample shield covered all. By this figure we are to understand that true, living, active, genuine Faith in Christ, is invaluable, and proof against all the assaults of the enemy. It can, as St. Paul tells you, "quench the darts of the Evil one;" an allusion no doubt to those arrows and other missiles used in former times, to which combustibles were attached. Oh! may it cause your attention to be pointed to the one source of victory which is Faith in Jesus, and which you are told for your comfort, "overcometh the world."

Next we come to the offensive weapon, the "Sword of the Spirit" which the Apostle tells us is the Word of God: God's revealed Word. The sword is especially you know an offensive weapon and are we not taught the lesson by this expression, that our position in this world is to be one of conflict; conflict not with man, but with sin that doth so easily beset us? We must resist the assaults of Satan, and this is the weapon we must use to defend ourselves; the weapon which God has placed in our hands; the weapon which the Lord Jesus Christ used in His time of temptation and trial, "Sharper than any two edged sword; piercing even the joints and marrow."

Having described these weapons, I feel that I can only just refer to St. Paul's military metaphors. Thus, alluding to campaigning, in his epistles to Timothy, he recommends him to "fight the good fight of faith." In the third verse of the chapter, from which the text is chosen, he commences a passage in which the idea of the soldier predominates throughout—"For

though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." All this military phraseology evidently had reference to those Roman fortresses and outworks, which would be familiar to the eye in every region through which we know the Apostle Paul travelled. Rocky forts and strongholds of this kind we know, too, were built in his native city of Cilicia in order to intimidate robbers and pirates. One of the grandest of all these fortifications was the Necropolis, an outwork, which commanded the city of Corinth, and which was of course well known to the people to whom my text was addressed.

The subject is far from exhausted, but I must forbear. There are several other passages in St. Paul's writings, in which he alludes to "fighting," in a manner that may well give you encouragement in your spiritual warfare. You will remember he also speaks of the "war" in our members, and of being made "captive" to the Law of Sin. So when, referring to the realities of war, he prays that the "peace of God which passeth all understanding may keep your hearts and minds," the word translated "keep" might well be rendered as if he had said "garrison." Let us hope then that you will always keep in view that spiritual warfare, in which you and every follower of the Lord Jesus are engaged; that there is an enemy who is ever plotting for your destruction, and that the only weapons with which you can hope to defeat him are not to be found in the world's but in the Lord's armoury.

Pride, unbelief, covetousness, prejudice, worldly-mindedness are the outworks of Satan, that you have to attack, conquer, and pull down; and this you can only do by the weapons of the Lord of Hosts. These are the weapons, the possession of which will give you confidence day by day, and more and more convince you that it is not by power nor by might, but by the Spirit of the Lord alone, that victory is to be gained.

Then will you be rejoiced to know, that God helping you, if you shall have finished your course and kept the Faith, there is already laid up for you in heaven a crown of righteousness, which the Lord—the righteous Judge—shall give you at the Last great day, when all warfare, all struggles, all conflicts, shall be for ever over, and the great Captain of your salvation shall proclaim your victory before the Saints and Angels in Glory!

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

No. 14.

A Sermon

PREACHED BEFORE

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN,
THE PRINCE & PRINCESS OF WALES,

AT THE

THANKSGIVING SERVICE,

For the Restoration to Health of

"HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G.,"

BY

HIS GRACE THE
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

(*Rt. Hon. ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL TAIT, D.D., D.C.L.*)

AT

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1872.

"Every one members one of another."—Romans xii, 5

In those dark December days and nights of undefined dread, never to be forgotten, when hour after hour, sounding in our anxious ears in this city, the striking of a church clock, or the tolling of any passing bell, startled us with apprehension lest our worst fears were realized; all the people of this United

Kingdom—the whole British race everywhere, all of every blood who own allegiance to our Queen—joined in prayer as one family, a family wide as the world, yet moved by one impulse, watching over one sick bed, yearning with one heart, for one precious life.

To-day we are gathered, at the very centre of the kingdom, in this Church, the storehouse of ages of national associations, to present to God, the thanksgiving which the Nation offers again, as one family.

“Every one members one of another.” The family in its restricted sense—the State—the Church—each of these societies, is a direct institution of God. The Almighty Father, who, seeing at first that it was not good for his creature, man, to be alone, gave a help-meet for him, and children, stamped this on man’s nature, that he cannot do well his part in life without these social ties. Born into a family, nurtured in family life to develop his moral powers, carried usually to the grave by mourners of his own kin, Man has but a maimed existence if there be any flaw in his family life. Happy the people that prize as holy, this earliest form of society, and recognises God’s institution in every home.

Now, was not the anxiety of those mournful days intended to make our own home feelings more intense, and to cause us each more truly to realise the sacredness of an English home, while a nation’s prayers centred in one house, and the poorest and richest could not but try to picture the anxiety that pressed on mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters within that house, from the torn feelings of that natural affection which is the source of our deepest joys and sorrows? The poorest widow in the most neglected lane of London, felt as keenly as the greatest of those on whom Court favour smiles, that she had an interest in the Royal house, and was entitled to sympathise in its sorrows; and thus we were all drawn close together through those family affections which are the birthright and blessing alike of rich and poor, and the experience which enables them to sympathise with each other’s joys and woes. Poor families thus learn to sympathise with the rich and great, as, thank God, these also, through the same family affections, have learned to sympathise with the families of the poor. Thus God has used our trial to make us prize the family.

And then the State—the State, also, is an institution of God. In it, too, He has made us “members one of another.” In the

old days, as families grew, the Almighty Father saw that it was not good for men to be isolated. Families which were not near in blood ran risk of being shut up, each in its own stronghold. God welded them into the State, with scope for new and more extended affections, powers and duties. Has not our trial taught us more to reverence the State, as we have felt sympathy in our heart's heart for the Head of the State? Loyalty—it is dying out amongst us, is it? An old-fashioned thing, fit only to be locked up with the Regalia and other venerable monuments of antiquity, furnishing only a curious subject of antiquarian interest for the speculations of the enlightened philosophers and politicians of this new age? Well, somehow, feelings supposed to be dead, but only at the worst, slumbering, sprang forth; the love that was pent up in myriads of hearts burst all artificial barriers. The most thoughtful and the most thoughtless alike had somehow learned from recent experience to suspect that it fares ill with States in the day of trial, if they have lost their loyalty. There were still some who told us with prophet's voice, that the love of law, the love of liberty, reverence for the great representative bodies which for centuries have guided the nation's life, are inseparable from those intense feelings which make us reverence, not abstractions merely, or multitudinous bodies corporate, but individual living souls. This thought was moving in many hearts, and we were in the mood such thoughts engender, when God sent this trial to give our feelings life. In a moment, our sad anxiety, as soon as the reality of danger flashed upon us, stirred the memories of four and thirty years. The Accession—the Coronation—the Marriage, that blessed union of loving and congenial souls—the regulating social influence felt through all the land for so many years—the baptisms of the nine children—the dark day of 1861, which smote the hearts of England as it tore an August Presence from our view—the gradual restoration, as the days of mourning wore on—that spring morning on which all England rang with welcome to the young Princess who for us was leaving her northern home—the marriages of sons and daughters, and the births and baptisms of grandchildren. Just as in one of our own houses, when death threatens, the whole history of the loved object we fear to lose, comes back in the hours of waiting, so England was stirred by a hundred touching memories, when danger threatened the Royal House. And God doubtless thus touched our hearts

CHURCH SERMONS.

to deepen our loyalty, and make us prize better the thousand good things secured in a well-ordered State by love to the Head of the State.

And then the Church. Always in their hours of strongest feeling, men acknowledge that they need a church. We prayed in our churches in the day of anxiety. We gather here now in the nation's greatest church to record our thanks. God in Jesus Christ ordained for families and States that they should have this further sacred bond of union in the Church of Christ. States and nations and races, as they are separated and have rival interests, become estranged. So of old, Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, looked each on the other with suspicion or abhorrence. God willed in the ages at last to make them all one. Now a sacred bond connecting them, each separately, with God, had been felt to be needed even in the old primeval societies. The Family, the State, each required in its way to be made a Church through knowledge of God and worship, that it might not forget Him who gave it being at first, and whose presence was its only safe guide—that thus its members might better perform their several duties, individual and social. Thus the father of the family was from the first, the priest of the household; and the tribes of old, scarce formed into bodies politic, had each a priest-king. So when God built up a peculiar state of His own to be for all time, small as it was in extent and insignificant in power, far more than Egypt, or Greece, or Rome, the source of the world's civilization, He made it a Church—that is, He gave it knowledge of Himself. He imbued its laws and all its institutions with heavenly principles. He taught its people to look to His presence and guidance as their surest hope. But the sacred society thus instituted by God, was, as time wore on, to have a wider range. It was His purpose that soon, when Christ was revealed, its boundaries should extend, that it should embrace nation after nation, and at last, the whole earth; that in the Church of the living God, when it grew to its maturity, should be found a union for all mankind, from which all laws and institutions, all family, political, and international relations, should receive the eternal principles on which alone they must be regulated, if they are to last.

Brethren, does not experience teach that nations, if such there be which have no religion, have lost the only sure bond and stay of national life? We Englishmen, thank God! love the

Church. I speak not before this great assembly of any party divisions. It was one of the most marked features of our late anxiety, that in the broad circuit of the British Empire many joined in our prayers who scarcely knew the God to whom we prayed ; and none were more hearty in their prayers than God's ancient people. We trust a time is coming when all the races of the Empire may be one in faith, as we have been proved to be one in loyalty. But already to-day, amongst us Christians, it is left that in united prayers and thanksgivings we are one. God perhaps intended this lesson. It was very common in State prayers of old, as I find from the forms preserved at Lambeth, to speak of our unhappy divisions. Perhaps this common call to national prayer has been sent now to make us think of a happier union. We Englishmen, thank God, speaking generally, all love the Church of God. We believe in God. We know He watches over us in sorrow and in joy. We desire to make His law our rule of action. We Christians of England thank Him for the consolations He has provided for us in our anxieties through the birth, death, ascension, and living intercession of His Son. We of the Church of England prize our own forms and our own beliefs, and hold them to be best for our own souls and for the nation ; but, be our own form of Christian worship what it may, we all unite in this, that we acknowledge God to be our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour ; and we gather now in Christ's Temple to record our thankfulness for a great national mercy, and to express in the most solemn way—while we pay allegiance to our earthly Sovereign and speak of our reverence and love to her person and family—that we look upwards, for her, for those who are dear to her, for ourselves, for our families, and for the body politic, to The King, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, who controls all the events of our individual, and family, and national life. The Church of Christ is for all ranks, ages, races. Praise be to God, in Christ, we all, rich and poor, have learned to be united. The poorest, we have said, joined with the richest lately in prayer. If they are not here with us to-day, they are thanking God, as we are. Such a day makes us feel truly that we are "Members one of another."

HYMN SUNG ON THE OCCASION.

“ Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

“ O Thou our souls' salvation !
Our Hope for earthly weal !
We, who in tribulation
Did for Thy mercy kneel,
Lift up glad hearts before Thee,
And eyes no longer dim,
And for Thy grace adore Thee
In eucharistic hymn.

Forth went the nation weeping
With precious seed of prayer,
Hope's awful vigil keeping
'Mid rumours of despair ;
Then did Thy love deliver !
And from Thy gracious hand,
Joy, like the southern river,
O'erflowed the weary land.

Bless Thou our adoration !
Our gladness sanctify !
Make this rejoicing nation
To Thee by joy more nigh ;
O be this great Thanksgiving
Throughout the land we raise,
Wrought into holier living
In all our after days !

Bless, Father, him Thou gavest
Back to the loyal land,
O Saviour, him Thou savedst,
Still cover with Thine hand.
O Spirit, the Defender,
Be his to guard and guide,
Now in life's midday splendour
On to the eventide !

Amen.”

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR JOWETT, M.A.,

Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. LUKE'S, BERWICK STREET, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1872.

"The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."—John iv, 21.

These words have a sort of revolutionary sound, and are somewhat startling in quiet times and to ordinary minds. Yet they do not stand alone in the Gospel, nor are they only applicable to the Age in which Christ lived. There is a good deal of the same sort of language both in the Old Testament and in the New. When Christ says, "My kingdom is not of this world else would My servants fight for it," He means substantially the same thing. He does not mean that the Disciples must not fight now, though the time would come when they might fight, as in the Crusades for example, but that the kingdom of God is a Spiritual kingdom and founded on the belief that God is a Spirit. And when He speaks of His disciples as united with God and separated from the world, "I in them and they in Me that they should be perfect in one," He is certainly not thinking of them as established in the Church, and united in the priesthood, only for a common form of worship. He is taking another and a higher point of view, when He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them." "For there is no man who can cast out devils in My name." It is simply a mode of speech, a putting the outward in the place of the inward; of the carnal body in the place of the spiritual. He is grieved at the stupidity, and hardness of heart which He sees, and He says "It is the spirit that liveth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

These are some of the revolutionary sayings of Christ. There are many others; such as those, for instance, about the rich and the poor, about the Temple, and about the immediate coming of the Lord. If we turn from the New Testament to the Old, we shall hear a similar voice speaking to us in the prophets. If you look at the first chapter of Isaiah you will there read other words, alike not exactly in form but in spirit. "Bring no more

vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto Me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear *them*. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you : yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear : your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes ; cease to do evil. Learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Here, indeed, is a war against existing institutions, some of which had been legally sanctioned by God Himself. Here is a repetition of that lesson, which, however old, is always good, in all ages and in all countries ; the danger of putting the outward in the place of the inward ; the local and temporal in place of the moral and spiritual.

In this sermon I will draw your attention to the tremendous import of these words of Christ, "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father," and of other like words which occur elsewhere in Scripture—What is the meaning of them ?—Are they to be taken literally, and do they refer only, or chiefly, to the destruction of Jerusalem ? Do they not rather express a prophetic knowledge of a feeling that should exist in all ages ; to be dissatisfied with the world and the things of the world, whether secular or religious. We would fain rise above all these things and dwell with God only. This seems in fact to be the general character of St. John's Gospel. Such a spirit may be the source of disorder and may even affect the higher element of our lives. We may *know* that we have our appointed sphere, and may use the means which God has provided for us ; and yet we may feel how different life ought to be, and how differently our Religious and Political institutions must be regarded by God and man.

There is some degree of difficulty in reconciling these thoughts, and they press upon the mind strongly in connection with our daily duties. "How wearying, people say, all this is." And sometimes we think "This order of things cannot last ; it is too hollow, too much undermined." And then when this old form of things does not change, or changes very little (though the desired attempt at reform has been made,) then we are disappointed to find that the result has been less than was expected. Whether it be in Politics or in Religion, we find that the *causes* of existing institutions lie deeper than is at first sight imagined, and that the desire for change cannot easily be satisfied. When *we* are in our graves, yea, perhaps right on to the end of time, people will probably still continue to have

the same feeling, that all earthly things are unsatisfactory and unreal.

In the first place then let me remark, that the words of the text are not to be taken too literally.

Some there are who indeed think that the odour of the Pass-over still scents the atmosphere of Gerizim, delighting the senses of the traveller, and reviving recollections of old. So, although the return of the whole of the Jews to Jerusalem is a hope never likely to be realized, yet some of the truest and best of the representatives of that race linger in expectation round the remains of the Sacred City. But we need not perplex ourselves with this sort of literalism, or with enquiries as to whether the words of Christ may not sometimes appear to be contradicted by some isolated passage. In St. John's Gospel for instance, there is a passage not about the Future but about the Past, which has often puzzled commentators, and all through a mistranslation of a text. Christ is recorded to have said that all who ever came *before* Him, were thieves and robbers. Now that could not have been the meaning of the words, because it would have implied that Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the other great Prophets of old were all thieves and robbers. The passage "all who ever came before Me" really means, "all who ever came instead of Me." Christ is referring (not in the literal meaning of the words) to false prophets and teachers generally, and in particular to those who were living about the same time. The comparison of this passage with the text throws some degree of light upon both of them, and we may assume as a principle of all interpretations and, therefore, of Scripture interpretation, that we should never introduce logical distinctions where the whole style and character of the writing show that they have not been thought of.

So the prophecies both of the Old and New Testament are to be taken in the spirit rather than according to the letter. As to predictions of fact, they may or may not be verified at a particular time. The woman of Samaria—to whom the words of the text were addressed—when she discovered that Christ was a prophet, determined to make the most of her opportunity. She wants to know where men ought to worship; whether at Jerusalem or in Mount Chorazin, and so settle the great dispute between the Jews and the Pharisees. Our Lord answered the woman in words which at first there seems to be some difficulty in explaining. After the passage which forms the text, He goes on to say "Ye worship ye know not what, we know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews." This would seem to mean that the Jews were more likely to be right than the Samaritans, because they had both the prophets and the law, which the Samaritans had not; or because theirs was

the real religion, from which the Samaritans were a species of rebels; that they had in fact left this point of view for a higher one. "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem," for "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The question of the Samaritan woman Jesus either could not, or would not answer. In a similar spirit, on another occasion, when He was asked about the coming of the Lord, His only answer was "Whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Let us imagine, if we can, more precisely, the feeling with which these words were uttered.

Jesus saw the Jewish religion and its effects everywhere. He saw that its forms, its ritualism and its ceremonial observances, were powerless to touch the heart and the conscience. The Jewish law was not a principle that bound the hearts of all together, but rather a dividing principle that separated them from, not only the Samaritans, but all the rest of the world. The thought of the nature of God, of His truth, and His goodness, had almost passed away, overlaid by a multitude of details, supplanted as the belief in God always is, by man's belief in himself, his church, or his race. Men go on saying like the Jews, though not in the same words, "We have Abraham for our father; nevertheless of these stones God is able to raise up children unto Abraham." These words "We have Abraham for our father" and similar expressions show that the sense, or feeling of a universal Father had been excluded. The temple made with hands, the consecrated spot to which pilgrimages were to be made, had obscured the thought of Him who dwells in a house not made with hands, and Who has been pleased to take up His abode with us. Though a shadow of good things to come, it was not even a shadow then, but a vague impenetrable cloud coming between them and God.

Sometimes the mystery of the Past weighs upon mankind with undue pressure. What was done a thousand or sixteen hundred years ago has an effect upon us even now, that cannot often be avoided or undone. Forms of government, or of belief, to which *we* were no consenting parties, have been long ago settled for us, and we feel that the individual mind is powerless to alter them. In vain is it that we desire, or hope for, something better, and truer, and more adapted to our wants. Then thoughts begin to arise in our minds that such a world as this in which we live will some day come to our end; that the truth shall prevail at last; that the fire which has hitherto slumbered in the earth, shall burst forth, and burn up the chaff. Such volcanoes have already burst forth in the case of the German reformation and the first French revolution. There are men, however, who say to themselves "O Lord how long?" at

times seeming to think that the hour is at hand. They turn away from the sin, corruption, and decay, they see around them, and try to work their individual lot with God and Christ.

Many prophets have died unknown. They have desired to see things which they have not seen. They have closed their eyes to a world that has receded from them. They have found that the Kingdom of God was to be realized, perhaps upon earth in the course of ages, but chiefly in themselves in another state of being. Thus the words of Christ find a sort of analogy in the thoughts and hearts of a few persons. Living now, they have a feeling of sympathy with the world around them. Look into the general character of the Gospel of St. John and you will find that the narrative is not meant to be historical but spiritual; not descriptive of the outward forms of the Church, but of the inward life of the soul. It hardly ever touches upon the relation of believers to the external world and society, but only upon their relations to God and Christ. They are withdrawn from the world that they may be One with the Father and the Son. They eat the bread of life, and they drink the water of life, and they receive another spirit to guide them into all truth. They are no longer, as in the parable of the sower, growing together with the tares, nor do they become as the great tree under shadow of whose branches the birds of the air take shelter. They are branches indeed, from Christ the true vine, but no outward, power or glory is attributed to them. Nor are they bound together by any common symbol; for by a remarkable omission the institution of the Sacrament is not recorded in the Gospel of St. John. Many reasons have been suggested for this omission. The Apostle has indeed been charged with intentionally leaving out some things that are mentioned in the other Gospels. There is no actual proof, however, that he was ever acquainted with them. The probability is that he intended to put forward other phases in the character of Christ. Christ is not described in St. John's Gospel as though he had instituted Baptism or the Lords Supper, but as teaching that they are the bread of life and the water of life; and if we look closely, we shall see that St. John's recorded events in Christ's life, are generally narrated for the sake of some discourse which He made in connection with them, more than for the events themselves. The miracles related are very few, and some are altogether omitted. Those which are mentioned are evidently narrated principally for the sake of the lesson which accompanied them. Observe, for instance, the feeding of the five thousand as related in the three first Gospels. It is simply recorded as something wonderful; but in St. John's Gospel we get the lesson concerning the Bread of Life.

Returning, then, to the words of the text, and reading them by the light of other expressions in the Gospels, I think we are right in regarding them chiefly, or exclusively, in their spiritual import. Whether our Lord, or the recorder of His words, did intend to refer to the time of trouble and desolation which shortly (about forty years afterwards) was coming to Jerusalem and Samaria, we cannot determine. We believe, however, that He meant to refer to eternal Truth, and not to that particular fact. As, for instance, when He said, "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," He was probably speaking of a future which He anticipated for all ages. When we compare these eternal institutions with the language of prophecy in respect of the Church, or our own lives, and the requirements of the Divine law, we feel that we cannot stand, and we experience a longing, past all expression, to be something other than we are. Although we know that the kingdom of Christ is compatible with truth and the spirit of God, we know we are worshipping in a cold and formal manner, repeating forms of words that we sometimes scarcely stop to consider the meaning of, instead of making our whole lives, lives of worship, and of seeking after God and His holy word.

Nor need we hesitate to apply the words of the text to some of the forms of religion we see around us. The hour is coming when neither as Protestants nor as Catholics, neither as Churchmen nor as Dissenters, shall men worship the Father. There is a feeling of dissatisfaction which will sometimes steal over us as to the unrealities of teaching, and the unchristian appearance of our Christian country, when we see religious opinion moving strongly in *one* direction in another country, but divided into a number of different currents amongst ourselves. Our forms of worship are so much changed, that if our fathers and grandfathers could return to life they would regard them with extreme dislike. We feel, too, that we cannot trust the opinions of men. Men come and go, and their faces are only shadows of the past, revived from time to time. We do not wish to live and die in them, because they may fail us when they are most wanted. Neither do we desire to be like chameleons, changing our colours from year to year; nor do we wish to catch the particular epidemic of Religion which happens to be in vogue; nor be one part of our lives saying "Aye," and another "No," to the same proposition. We desire rather to have the peaceful growth of religion in the soul; a belief not shaken by the accident of public opinion, or the discoveries of science; Nor the satire of the world, which is the same in all ages, and bound up with goodness and truth everywhere. When we find that the world is changed and changing about us, that points of belief once looked upon as sealed and certain, are now become doubtful, then is the time

to go back to the simple principles of religion, and not allow their internal force and beauty to be interfered with, or dethroned, by the externals which are always endeavouring to usurp their place. "To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God ; When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive ;" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself" ; "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" ;—these are the primary principles of religion that can never be altered, and they are so simple that they can hardly fail to be understood.

When we proceed to look at the Church's different forms of worship, and the different systems of philosophy the world has seen, what do we find ? That these have varied with the opinions and the philosophy of different ages, and that they are not the *essence*, but the *means*, of religion. Because I see that certain things I once deemed essentials of the Christian religion are common to other systems of religion, shall I therefore cease to be a follower of Christ ? Hence the importance of not putting the lesser before the greater, of making the duty of worshipping at Jerusalem every year stand before the great truth that "God is a spirit." We worship God here, in this consecrated building, where we have the sounds of music, the storied windows, and the architecture of former ages, all pleasing to the senses ; but if I were on a desert island, with none of these things, could I not worship him still, and even perhaps more sincerely, because then He would be my only hope ? If of the Temple of Jerusalem not one stone was left upon another, and if the visible Church of Christ in this and other countries were overthrown, should I therefore renounce my belief in Him ? Yes, perhaps so, if my belief was in houses built with hands, but not if I reflected that the practice of religion has departed from uniformity in a more striking manner, in some respects than our political institutions. It is *the truth* of the Word of God, and not the vessel which contains it, which is the foundation upon which our faith must be reared. Applying the words of Christ to our own times, we may say, "The hour is coming when there shall be neither Catholic nor Protestant," and so on ; but we do not mean, nor suppose, that those well-known names will cease from among us, or that the things signified will altogether disappear. We simply mean that those distinctions will become unimportant in comparison with the great truth that "God is a spirit."

The more the true spirit of religion is understood, the more externals will disappear. Shall we think of a good man as other than a good man, because he happens to belong to another sect or communion ; because he does not believe in the same doctrine that we do ? Ignorance, is the parent of all this estrangement.

CHURCH SERMONS.

When we read history, we see that most of our differences arose out of feelings which we no longer share. When we turn from the record of ecclesiastical distinctions in our own country, to Europe and the larger book of the Religions of the world, we see that the disputes which led to them are infinitely small, in comparison with the greater interests of religion, and we wonder that men's minds could have been so distorted. When we look up to Heaven, and contemplate the stars and the moon and the planets, are not these little disputes calmed and even silenced by the thought, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" When we think of God as a Spirit, must not the contemplation of that great truth absorb all the differences which divide us? Just as in the history of other countries, we have read of two neighbouring border towns, the inhabitants of which have been at bitter enmity for generations; something in the political world has happened to bring them together under one nationality, and thenceforth they have lived on the most cordial terms of friendship. And are the divisions of the Church to be more lasting than the differences between cities and nations?

These are some of the points of view from which I have ventured to regard the words of the text as being of a revolutionary character.

We must however, my brethren, provide for the religion of the next world, as well as the present. It is certainly an unsentimental thing to try to live for another world as well as our own; to be compelled to walk, when we want to fly. And yet much good has been owing to aspirations of this sort. We may be *in* the world, and yet far away. Difficulties may surround our path, but if the difficulties be not in ourselves they may generally be overcome. Aspirations for a higher life than that in which we live, will in a measure fulfil themselves. We may in fact *create* the happiness we dream of; and though there may be always something more, to be done, and our thoughts may outrun our utmost exertions, yet we may found upon such thoughts, whether for the church or for the world, a sense of repose that is exceedingly grateful to the mind. And if at this time, or at any other time, we see that great changes have occurred, and may be again expected, in the opinions of men about both political and religious institutions and about even the Bible itself, that is at once a reason why we should seek to have some solid principles to fall back upon, which cannot be shaken by any of these changes.

A great work it is for a man to build up his own life as he ought, even with all the help of the companionship of good men, and the guidance and authority of the past. There may however, be a little more difficult work reserved for some of us, namely, to build up that life, looking not to the *past* but the

future; to think of a world that is not now, but that may be, twentyfive or thirty years hence, when many of us will not be here; when many opinions now new, shall already become old; when many institutions now young shall not only become old, but have passed away entirely. Looking in that way not towards the past, but aspiring towards the future may accomplish much. For such a life we may find examples in the Jewish Chronicles and although he who so lives may not see all he desired accomplished, yet at his death he will have the consciousness of having done the most he could in his life. He knows he has done his work, such as it was. But when we indulge in these visions of the distant future we are always liable to be led astray by some "will o' the wisp," propounding to us remote ends without supplying us with the means. And here I would add a few remarks, touching the manner in which these great anticipations may be made susceptible of good.

The way of the future lies along the present, and we can only do anything for another generation by attending to our own. What we can do depends upon ourselves, and if we have the education and the force of character to use the means at our disposal, then the work of Christian improvement is easy; but if we have not, we not only do no good for others, but we stand in the way of our own improvement. Therefore I say, with regard to all these things, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Some there are who may say "I do not understand that I am bound to do anything for the next generation; I wish to do my duty as the clergyman of a country parish; I wish to be honest as a tradesman; I wish to bring up my family properly." I will ask one of these persons to consider for a moment what this world may be thirty or twenty years hence, and what he would probably be doing if his life extended into the next generation.

Would not that thought have a sobering and humbling effect upon him? Would he not be disposed to deal with the affairs of life in a larger and more liberal spirit? Would he not think more of the permanent and less of the transient elements of life? He would not be thinking much of parties or prejudices, would not know whether either the parties or the prejudices would then exist. There are also certain possibilities for which he would have to allow and one of these would be the uncertainty of his own life. He would not walk less by faith, because he carefully considered what one year might add to another, or that difficulties which could not be overcome in a short life, might be conquered in a long one. There is some difficulty I know, in setting about doing things for a generation we shall never know, and for the believer in Jesus Christ to have to arrange for the transmission of his knowledge and his hopes to the future;

CHURCH SERMONS.

to live not only for the life which comes afterwards, but for that which now is.

And lastly, there is a sense in which the words of the text are applicable to all of us. The time is coming when neither in this church nor elsewhere shall we worship. All worldly and religious distinctions will have passed away from our minds, for we shall be in the Presence of God. Let us now think of things as they will be, when *we* shall have passed away.

Political and Ecclesiastical questions will no longer have any importance for us then. Let us therefore think of ourselves as we shall be when we have to appear before God; when the fashions of thought, and different opinions of this world shall have been all swept away; when we shall have to measure ourselves not by the standard of men but of God; for the opinions of men fade and die like a flower, but the word of God shall stand for ever.



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 15.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. JAMES MOORHOUSE, M.A.,

Rural Dean and Vicar of St. James's, Paddington.

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, WHITEHALL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1872.

"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity."—Ecclesiastes ii, 1

King Solomon's pursuit after supreme happiness in the ways of Wisdom turned out a failure. He therefore determined to prosecute his search in another direction, and that was in the path of Pleasure. Nor is the transition at all unnatural because true happiness consists of three elements, the intellectual, the moral, and the religious. Unhappily, however, nothing is more common than to find men identifying happiness with the intellectual alone, and finishing their pursuit in disappointment, deep and dreadful as the mysterious events beyond the grave. For unless the lamp of Faith be lighted they soon get lost like a belated traveller on some dreary waste. Lifting up high his flickering taper of Knowledge, it shews him nothing but monstrous shadows which make the darkness deeper. What sort

of a man could he be who would think of venturing further under such circumstances without map or landmark? Better turn into the nearest turfcutter's hut and obtain what shelter he can.

I know there are many who go about like the laughing Philosopher, saying, "Why should we trouble ourselves any more about the Infinite and Eternal God and His judgments? Why be uneasy about the fears and questionings of my own restless heart, when with all my labours I am not one foot nearer to happiness?" But Knowledge is not *power* in this case. It cannot avert calamities; it cannot resist temptation; it cannot win love; it cannot banish evil and ignorance; it cannot lift the veil of the night of Death. Why then waste our energies and sacrifice our strength in hankering and striving after the pleasures of this lower life which fail us even as we grasp them? Let them go, like the shadows that they are. We may ordinarily reckon upon having fifty years of life, and we have five senses given to us. Let us see what can be got out of them. Not much perhaps; but that little is certain if we only seize it at once and do not waste our time in mere dreaming. Still it is a great and obvious truth, that not much is to be had in this way except in the heyday of youth, when the senses are all on the alert and the imagination multiplies their enjoyments in endless quantity and variety. Everything however is good in its time and its season, not excepting this glamour of the youthful senses, which makes everything for the time appear glorious and bright. Let there be no illusions however. Our career is on a perpetually shifting shoal, and there is no solid happiness to be found upon it. Let a man once act upon any other impression and he will soon find out his mistake, and learn that this too is vanity. This was the experimental trial that king Solomon made, and the result of which he describes in this second chapter.

Now a single look at the description of this experiment will shew that it was most *thoroughly* tried; and that it was tried too, not only with infinite patience, boldness, and perseverance, but with extraordinary wisdom combined with most extraordinary opportunity. Just look at the opportunity, for instance. Solomon was king of Israel at the period of its

greatest wealth and splendour ; his resources were unbounded and his means unlimited ; whatever wish or desire presented itself to his mind could be instantly realized. In fact when one reads of the magnificence of his palaces, of the almost fabulous value of his jewels and adornments, of his stores of gold and silver, of his groves, and his temples, and his fountains ; of the beauteous flowers and the luscious fruits, of his countless treasures, of his troops of concubines beautiful in their matchless charms, of the soft music rendered with voluptuous skill, it seems all like a fairy dream, rather than a reality. Like the owner of the famous lamp in the Eastern fable, this splendid king of Israel seemed only to have to wish, and all he desired was granted. We know of nothing like it, or even approaching to it in these days, except in the case of some exceptional millionaire like Beckford, or some successful discoverer of one of those mines of wealth we occasionally read of on the other side of the Atlantic. In some few things these moderns have even outdone the king of Israel, though in real wealth and opportunity for enjoyment of all kinds, Solomon was undoubtedly the superior. In all this chapter the Royal pleasure seeker tells us of the calculated method of his madness—" I said of laughter, It is mad : and of mirth, What doeth it ? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom ; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards ; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits ; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees ; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house ; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me ; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces ; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem ; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any

joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Now, with all his fondness for indulgence, king Solomon was no mere reckless voluptuary. His wisdom remained with him, and he could turn away from his pleasures and survey them with a sort of lofty disdain to see how much of real delight they had been able to furnish to the experimenter. He was able to impose such a restraint upon his passions when necessary, as to avoid satiety and disgust. Sense had all it craved, with wisdom to protect it from the ordinary consequences of excess. Surely, never again in the history of man will the experiment of pleasure be so fully, so audaciously, yet so wisely and so favourably made. And what was the result? Was the royal hunger after happiness in any way stayed by the administration of this unlimited nectar to the senses? "Behold," says the Preacher in the text, "this also is vanity." Such was Solomon's experiment.

At the Imperial banquet, beneath the shady grove, beside the sparkling fountain, the bursting bubble, the fading flower, and the empty wine cup sufficed to remind him of the vanity of human life. All the splendid gilding of the show did not make it a whit more real. He saw that though to-day he might have realized his every hope, to-morrow he might be gone, and a brute or a fool be set in his place who would ruthlessly spoil his earthly paradise or carelessly dissipate his possessions. He felt then like the poet who says

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

But if this was the experience of king Solomon how much more certainly must it have been that of those who have pursued the same object but without Solomon's prudence and opportunity. And here it may be remarked that we think much more of our opportunities of pleasure than we ought, because the fact is that it is more upon the *capacity* than upon the opportunity that the enjoyment depends. Solomon's experiment might be fully and adequately tried even in a cottage, but what

has always been the unvarying result in all cases ? Whenever a man has sought the supreme good in æsthetic pleasures, first there has been the excitement and the madness growing upon what it was fed upon ; then the restless contempt for everything else besides ; then the gathering up of every source of vitality upon each fresh opportunity, as though for some supreme effort that must succeed ; then the conviction that there has been an unwise expenditure of force, and at last when the voice of conscience makes itself heard, and the claims of beauty and every other attraction have to be cast aside, there comes an uneasy sense of constraint upon the will ; of a writhing under the iron fetters of habit ; possibly trouble in various forms ; then a failure of the fresh springs of emotion ; then exhaustion, then reaction, and finally disgust.

This is the inevitable end and these are the ever fatal enemies, of all sensual enjoyments. The natural powers are guided into habits for which they are not capable and were never intended, and although in some cases there may be a Providential arrest in the descent to this terrible abyss, how many instances alas ! of the contrary could we put our hands upon in a short time in this great city ! Take those for example who have indulged for a life time in what is called " Club-life " and see how many cases there are where the whole bitter penalty has been paid. Painful indeed is it to see old men tired of their former pursuits, yet apparently bound to them by some diabolical necessity ; weary of passing the same monotonous round, aye, as weary as the captive going his rounds in a prison, and the gaolers who forbid his egress, as bitterly merciless, as any who ever had watch and ward, over the worst of criminals. And so the poor worn-out seeker after pleasure goes on his weary way, his companions laughing and scoffing at him, and himself blushing for his failures, and in the midst of all, there comes the wretched consciousness of sated appetites, of life come down indeed to its very lees and dregs, without bringing him either honour or repose, and, to crown all, the knowledge that when Death shall come to close the miserable scene no human being shall mourn over his grave. So in a greater or less degree, the degree being in proportion to the sin, every one that liveth to pleasure is dead while he liveth. And

in the present day the danger of this death is great and obvious. The general ease and luxury in which we live, the abundance of meats and drinks, the plentiful supply of all our wants in a general way, the freedom of going to and fro, and the softness and conventionality of our mode of life, each and all hold out temptations to sensual gratification to which but too many are yielding. No one can help seeing that the rising generation is becoming more and more dependent for its comfort, upon luxuries which older men despise. See how the hours of amusement are prolonged farther and farther into the night, until not only are the hours of prayer and family devotion sacrificed, but even the ordinary arrangements of business are seriously interfered with. Many young men act as if the only object of living was to cram as much pleasure as possible into one lifetime. Called Christians, they may be, indeed, but where do we see the faintest impress of the Cross upon their lives? Are they patient with ignorance and perversity? Do they deny themselves a single indulgence in order to advance the Saviour's kingdom? On the contrary, they strive to procure for themselves everything the heart can wish for, and as soon as the wretched purveyors of what is called "pleasure" can discover or invent any new luxury, they rest not until they have obtained it.

My brethren, if you do call yourselves Christians, let me ask you to compare your lives with that of our blessed Redeemer. Think of the glory that He laid down when, coming into our nature, He took upon Himself the form of a servant. Look at that poor home which barely sheltered His childhood. Remember, how in long, though eventful obscurity, He waited patiently for the day to come when His work should be done. Then follow Him through all those scenes of toil and disappointment; His weary wanderings by day, and His prayerful watchings by night; above all think of the end of His sufferings, of His friendlessness and humiliation, of the cruel hatred of His enemies, and the cowardly desertion of His friends; of His agony and bloody sweat; of His cross and passion; think of the bitterness of that cup of misery which He voluntarily drank to the very dregs that we might not have to drink it; and then ask yourselves, what in your lives there is at all like that? Where is your cross? Where is your tender love for Him?

CHURCH SERMONS.

Are you seeking for something to bear in His name? Something to show that you do not regard yourselves as your own but bought with a price? Are you determined to commit to Him your body and your Spirit which are His?

I do not ask you, however, because I speak in this manner, to turn ascetic and denounce the world and the flesh which are so much abused. There is hardly a single note or trace of asceticism in the perfect harmony of that gentle life the Christian should lead. All things are sweet and fair, all things are pure and bright, all things are lovely and holy to him who is wedded to the Eternal Founder of our faith. To take up the cross does not mean that we are to relinquish all tender associations, to give up all taste for domestic comforts and happiness; for what are they but shadows of that heavenly beauty with which our heavenly Father has beatified all His creation? It is not that. It is the carrying out in our daily lives that fundamental precept of our Lord and Master, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Make not Pleasure your god, but seek in God your pleasure.

Suffer me, my dear Christian brethren, in conclusion to suggest to you one or two practical rules in the application of this truth to your daily life.

Be determined, in the first place, to spend no more than a fixed proportion of your worldly wealth on yourselves. If you have cultivated tastes, enjoy them, but enjoy them in becoming measure, making it a matter of conscience that no self-indulgence whatever, even of legitimate desire shall be suffered to rob God of what is God's due.

Secondly, even within the margin of your allowed expenditure maintain habits of simplicity in your eating, drinking, dress, manners, conversation, your whole bearing and life. Encamp within your own place, as the great Duke of Wellington was wont to do, in that simple manner, that you could walk out of it at a day's notice and feel the loss of none of its comforts or indulgences. Again, not only in your private and personal life but in your public conduct, aim at a healthy Christian simplicity. If you cannot become conspicuous without danger of pride, at least discourage by your example every increase of that extrava-

gance which is the curse of a luxurious world. Live hardly, fare plainly, work diligently, and let it be your pride to refrain from even lawful indulgences, and to show by the contrast of a pure, useful and manly life, rather than by looks and words, that you feel how contemptible it is for a man to idly drawl out his words, and dress as if he were an up-grown child, or for a woman to devote her days to dressing and idleness, as if the statement were not true that she was an heiress of immortality.

I speak thus plainly because we must have a down-right determination to convert our faith into practice. Oh ! what a different life it would be, how different in its peace and its joys if every one would only do what is in his power for usefulness ; if we were once to set to work to imitate the life of our blessed Master ! Make the effort ; begin at once ; and if anything should come in your way to suggest that your self-denial ought to have limits different from those fixed by the gospel, hold no parley with it, but strong in the strength of the Lord Jesus, trample it under your feet. Give of your riches, and talents, and labour, freely and ungrudgingly, pouring out the riches of your mind without stint to every poor soul whom Christ has died for ; then will men believe that you have the Religion of the Redeemer in your hearts, because they will see His spirit in your lives and will love It for your example.



A Sermon

BY THE

REV. J. FULLER RUSSELL, B.C.L., F.S.A.

Rector of Greenwich, Kent.

PREACHED AT ST. BOTOLPH'S CHURCH, NORTHFLEET, KENT.

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1872.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."—James i, 19, 20.

THE admonition of St. James in the text, is an inference from certain statements which are contained in the verses which precede it. The Apostle is addressing the Jewish converts at large, over whom as Bishop of Jerusalem, he possessed ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He begins his Epistle by enjoining the exercise of patience, and a steadfast adherence to the Gospel, in the midst of their tribulations and temptations. Be not dismayed and cast down—is the spirit of his exhortation—but deem it on the contrary, a matter of complete rejoicing, that you are exposed to griefs and trials. Be assured, they are sent to you for good; that they are trials of your faith, which alone can produce such patient submission to the dispensations of Providence; such resignation, as will render its possessors mature in every part of the Christian character, fit for the duties of their several stations, and wanting nothing to the performance of every work of piety. Having glanced at the Divine source whence wisdom to improve the afflictions of the believing Hebrews was to be derived, and the mode of obtaining it, St. James passes on from general to particular trials. He adverts to the two great conditions of life,—poverty and riches, and the temptations peculiar to each. In the former to discontent, in the latter to pride and arrogance. Against the indulgence of these sinful dispositions he urges certain considerations. He teaches the "brother of low degree" to comfort himself with the thought of his exaltation, by the privileges

conferred on him by Christianity, and he bids the wealthy believer to rejoice that by the influence of the Gospel he is "meek and lowly in heart," "poor in spirit," and, consequently, according to the promise of the Beatitude, an inheritor of the "kingdom of heaven." In the words which follow, he suggests a strong motive for humility, namely, the instability of all worldly possessions; and he then pronounces a blessing on all, rich and poor alike who, obeying his suggestions, shall encounter their temptations with success,—“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”

It may be inferred from what immediately succeeds, that some of the converted, but inconsistent Hebrews, had sought refuge in the lying doctrine of Necessity, and excused their misdeeds upon the plea that they were tempted to transgression by God Himself. To rebut so fatal an error, the Apostle proceeds to distinguish between temptations in the sense of trials, and temptations in the more common signification of allurements to sin. The latter, he insists, must in nowise be ascribed to the Almighty. “God,” he affirms, “cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.” Sin proceeds from the lower part of a man’s fallen nature, which urges him on to the commission of iniquity, and which, by Divine grace, may always be mortified and overcome. God is not the Author of evil, but the Fountain of all good, the Father of all spiritual light and joy, the Giver of every perfect gift, “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” neither alienation nor obscuration. Such, in substance, is the statement of St. James, and in proof thereof, he goes on to instance the illustrious privileges which God, in His free grace and mercy, His mere goodwill and pleasure, had bestowed on the Jews formerly, so now also in their recent deliverance from the “bondage of corruption” into the “glorious liberty” of the children of the Highest, their regal sonship and election (first in time, of all the converts to the Gospel) into the family of Christ—“Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.”

The words, dear brethren, which I have chosen for our more especial notice, come next to those which you have just heard. I have been thus particular in exhibiting the scope of the

Apostle's address up to the point at which we have arrived, because the text appears to be an inference from the foregoing observations; and there has been a question among expositors whether it respects only the verse immediately before it, or the whole of what has been affirmed concerning the dealings of God with our race in the economy of salvation. It will be safer, perhaps, to favour the second of these suppositions, since there does not appear to be any reason for separating the *crowning* fact of the mercy of our heavenly Father from the other statements concerning Him which you have heard, and which occur in the fifth, twelfth, thirteenth, and seventeenth of the preceding verses. This, then, in brief, seems to be the argument of St. James;—since God is the liberal Giver of wisdom and every good and perfect gift, the Father of lights, unchangeable in His attributes, Who tempteth no man, but of His free graciousness hath begotten us again to be the first-fruits of the Church—His new creation—and had promised a crown of immortality to those who love and obey Him; therefore—such being the case—“let every man” amongst us, “be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

It would seem then, that it is peculiarly obligatory upon those on whom the Almighty confers any blessings, to be specially careful respecting their deportment. The converted Jews, on the ground of their higher privileges, their having been of old the “peculiar people of God,” and now the first-fruits of the Christian Israel, were prone to indulge a spirit of loquacious pride, undervaluing and talking against their Gentile brethren in the Faith. St. James reminds them that since their Creator was too just and good, arbitrarily to favour one part of His rational creation to the injury of the other, any preference which He had shown them was merely for the sake of the ultimate beneficial consequences which were to accrue to the rest of the world; and that, instead of being inflated thereby, they ought, on that very account, to be the more humble, gentle and forbearing. Instead of being as they too frequently were dull of hearing—disinclined to listen to remonstrance; swift to speak—too ready on every occasion to talk concerning themselves and their religion; swift to wrath—too willing to indulge in unhallowed violence in the defence and promulgation of the truth; it was their duty to endeavour the very

reverse, to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," for by human passions the designs of God in the moral government of the world (or, as they are termed in the text, "the righteousness of God") would rather be impeded than advanced.

Such, brethren, is the admonition of St. James to the Hebrew converts. Let us now inquire how far our position resembles that of these persons. Now it cannot admit of doubt, that what was true in regard to the mercy and justice of God to man, when addressed to the Jewish believers, is equally true at the present time; and further, it will not I suppose be denied, that we, like them, are signally blessed with religious privileges. Partakers in common with other members of Christ, of those gifts and graces which are conveyed to the Faithful by the ordinances of the Gospel, our position is preferable to that of our brethren in some other portions of the Christian Church, in that we are possessors of the "Catholic Religion," pure and bright as when first "delivered to the Saints." However much the sentiments of many who call themselves English Churchmen, may differ from primitive and Catholic truth, they are as far at variance with the authorized Formularies of our Church. Our Prayer Book, in all really essential matters, speaks the language of the best and purest times. Thus far then I repeat, are we, and the Churches in communion with us, privileged beyond some other divisions of the household of God, which have erred by adding to the revealed Word—the Divine deposit—and thus veiling its beauty and splendour. To enlarge upon the spiritual blessings which we enjoy, when contrasted with theirs who have separated themselves from the great Company of the Faithful, would be foreign to the matter in hand. Enough probably has been said, to show that we are much in the same position as those to whom the text was primarily addressed. It, therefore, behoves us to examine more at length, and, if need be, to labour to profit by the exhortation of the Apostle, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

"Be swift to hear," is the first command of St. James. This injunction has been thought by some to relate to the "word of truth," mentioned in the preceding verse, and to be also connected with a subsequent direction, namely, "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." According to this opinion, the purport of the precept will be:—

Since you have been brought into a state of grace, and owe your consequent privileges to the Gospel revelation, be ready with willingness and docility to listen to such further instruction, as may proceed from the same source. I admit that this may possibly be part of the Apostle's meaning, but there appears to be no necessity for supposing it to be the whole, or indeed, the more important portion of it. Albeit the Apostle may refer to the ready and teachable hearing of Truth in the abstract, and particularly religious truth, it may be affirmed that he has in view much more than this, even the enjoining upon his converts, a general teachableness of disposition. Consider the fault of the Hebrew Christians which gave rise to his injunction. They were not so far as we know, particularly inattentive to the verities of the religion they had embraced. Their sin seems to have been a want of charity towards their Gentile brethren in Christ, a deafness to such remonstrance as pressed upon them the cherishing of an opposite spirit; in a word, they were inflated with spiritual pride. And now to bring this subject home to ourselves do we come under the same condemnation? what is the habitual disposition of our own minds? Are we self-satisfied, proud of our mental and spiritual endowments, contemptuous towards those who are not equally gifted in these respects with ourselves; or, are we open to admonition and reproof, are we glad to receive instruction from all who are qualified to confer it? Do we follow His Divine example, Who although He could confound by His wisdom the doctors of the assembled Sanhedrim, returned to the cottage home of His lowly parents, and consented to be "subject unto them?" Such was the teachable disposition of the Holy Jesus, such the frame of mind recommended by the Apostle in the text, a disposition very alien to the self-sufficiency of the present age. Baptized men there are now, alas! who are too high-minded to hearken meekly to instruction of any kind, and who, perhaps, feel the greatest repugnance to religious teaching and admonition; who will not as they say do such violence to their reason as to believe the great marvels of the Faith; and, despising the words of her who is "the pillar and ground of the truth," too often attempt to fabricate a religion for themselves, suited to their crude ideas of that in which a Revelation should consist, and moulded by their private notions, prejudices and inclinations.

I proceed to notice the second command of St. James:—Be “slow to speak.” *The government of the tongue* is here insisted on, and more particularly in regard to religion. The Apostle warns the Hebrew converts against a sin of which they seem to have been guilty—the talking about their spiritual privileges, and themselves as the possessors of those privileges, and thus exalting their own position to the prejudice of the Gentile believers. He condemns, in a word, sinning with the tongue even on the subject of religion. He contrasts talking, with doing—“If any man among you,” he adds, “seems to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” The injunction, “slow to speak,” further seems to rebuke the rash and arrogant censure and condemnation of others—“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” It also cautions against speaking dogmatically and dictatorially, usurping the office of teaching in the hope of obtaining human praise, and without due seriousness, reverence, modesty and consideration. Such is the intent of the Apostolic admonition which appears to have been well deserved and attended to some extent at least, by beneficial results. It is recorded of the primitive believers, that they were subsequently charged by the heathen with a disinclination to speak openly of their religion, and the truth of this imputation is acknowledged by the early apologists of the Faith who affirmed of the Christian laity, in particular, that it was not their custom to assert and defend Christianity publicly, but only to give an answer to those inquirers who demanded a reason for the hope that was in them. It was thus that Churchmen, when “the Queen’s daughter” was “all glorious within, and her clothing” was “of wrought gold,” obeyed the direction of St. James. How different, in this respect, was the Apostolic precept and the Church’s practice in her first days, from the conduct of many who now bear the Christian name! Where, among those noisy professors who flippantly scoff at the “spiritual blindness” of the Saints of undivided Christendom, and blush not to sneer at what they, in their ignorance, consider “the doctrinal errors of the Apostolic Fathers,” do we find any sympathy with the cautious reticence recommended by St. James?

CHURCH SERMONS.

I speak with no acrimonious and unkind feeling, but with unfeigned regret when I assert that Religion, in some quarters, appears to consist of little else than a mere parade of words and feelings, as though to be religious, involved the necessity of making Christianity a subject of conversation, in places, and at seasons the most incongruous; and not something too sacred, sublime and mysterious, to be bandied from mouth to mouth, and exposed to the scrutiny of the profane. Alas! brethren, is not this so to speak, to lift the veil of the Holy of Holies and reveal to the gaze of the careless or scoffing multitude, the wonders of its most secret recesses; or—to change the metaphor—rudely to crowd around the Ark of the Covenant, and even scatter its hallowed treasures upon the pavement of the outer sanctuary?

Again with what presumption are questions, in these days, canvassed and resolved, which “even the angels,” reverently and at a distance, “desire to look into!” Nor is it possible, in this place, to be unmindful of that uncharitableness of judgment, so often manifested by many against all who differ from them, which leads me naturally to observe on the third particular of St. James’s teaching, namely, that Christians should be Especially careful to be “slow to wrath.” There is nothing which the world is so quick to animadvert upon as *angry* Christianity, if indeed, such language be not a misnomer. Those whom we may justly think poor theologians, may yet have quick discernment that we are but poor Christians. *Tempers are more easily judged of than definitions, and a sour believer is likely to confirm many a man in Unbelief.* Nothing, believe me, is more closely observed by “those who are without,” than the temper of the professed Disciples of the Prince of Peace, and while—remembering that “the wisdom that is from above, is *first pure*”—we earnestly maintain our religion in all its integrity, we should bear in mind that it is “then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated,” and therefore, that a bitter controversial spirit, impatient of contradiction, and uttering invective, cannot be enough condemned and deplored. Such was the spirit of the Jewish zealots, whose conduct is implicitly rebuked in the text; and when we consider how very liable we all are to be influenced by it, and how disastrous are its effects upon the cause we are seeking to defend, we shall be ever on our guard against its encroachments, and pray with the deepest anxiety for deliverance from its thrall.

It only remains for me briefly to refer to the concluding words of the text :—"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." The Almighty does *not* need the force of our worldly passions for the advancement of the grand designs of His moral government. We can only hope to be instrumental in the furtherance of these, so long as we place ourselves unreservedly at His disposal ; and, praying that His will may be done in us, act entirely under His direction. Away then, with all those human schemes by which men in their impatience, and after their own fashion, seek to assist Omnipotence ! Their clamour, or their violence, will be worse than useless. Our strength is to "sit still, and behold the salvation of God ;" to follow only where He leads, to serve Him only in His appointed way. He, in His own good time, will bring to a glorious consummation all His designs for the predicted triumph of the Church, and the renovation of the world. Let it be our constant and only aim, by "patient continuance in well doing," to be worthy to rejoice "with all Saints," when that period "of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." So, through the aid of God the Holy Ghost, and the Death and Merits, the offering and prevailing Intercession, of our great High Priest, shall we share the rapture of the "holy and humble men of heart" who will "bless the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 16.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

*The recent calamity in India, the direct result of not
executing the Divine Sentence upon Murderers.*

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

PREACHED AT EATON CHAPEL, EATON SQUARE,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1872.

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man."—Genesis ix, 5, 6.

A great public calamity has just befallen us in India. And it is directly attributable to circumstances, which demand serious attention, both from those who have at heart the welfare of society, and from those who reverence the laws of God.

A murderer, in direct violation of the Divine command, was permitted to live. And, as God often abandons to the folly of their own imaginations—those who set His authority at defiance, this flagrant sin was followed up, by the almost incredible infatuation, of very shortly allowing the murderer to go abroad within the limits of the penal settlement—merely because he had wit enough to submit quietly to the confinement from which it was impossible for him to escape. His nature, however re-

mained unchanged. His craft kept him quiet, until a sufficiently strong temptation was presented to his ferocity, and then *no* consideration even of his own present interests could restrain the passion of revenge, aided by the fanatical hope of being rewarded in the next world for taking away the life of a Christian infidel. The result is, that all India is thrown into the deepest mourning, and all England weeps in sympathy with her, and with the bereaved family. It is no personal judgment upon the individual—who, was probably not more guilty in this matter than his countrymen at large; it is a judgment upon the nation, which professes to believe God's Word, and yet habitually violates what, according to that word, was the first law that God ever gave to man for the regulation of human society—except the original foundation of society in the institution of marriage. We are not arguing, observe, that a murderer should not be allowed to live, *because* it has in this *particular case* brought disaster; such an argument would be equally valid against any high functionary of state visiting a convict establishment—for the crime might have been committed by a man under sentence of imprisonment for some minor offence. What we do say is, that when God allows such serious consequences to follow a plain and flagrant violation of one of His own laws, it constitutes a loud call to repentance, addressed to the whole nation—a call which it behoves all God's ministers earnestly to enforce.

Now this command, that murder is to be punished with death, is no mere Jewish enactment, which of course, would not be binding upon all nations under all circumstances. Very important *principles* may be gathered from the criminal code which Moses gave to the Jews, that is, from observing what God deemed best for a people in their condition; but the mere fact of anything being forbidden or commanded to them, by no means proves that the same law should be embodied in every other national code. In this case, however, it is a law given to man *as man*, through Noah the second father of the human race; and it is as universally binding as the original institutions of Marriage and the Sabbath, given to our first father Adam.

The universality of its obligation is also shewn by the ground on which it is put—"For in the image of God made He man." It is not merely for the safety of human society, that the murderer is to be put to death, though undoubtedly that was

one of God's purposes,—it was to avenge the insult offered to Him in whose image man was made. It is the majesty of God that is outraged by murder ; and His honour, rather than the security of man, requires it to be avenged by the death of the murderer.

This is rendered still more apparent by the command that even an animal who kills a man is to be put to death—which can only be required as an outward sign of reverence for the Divine image in man ? for neither does the animal deserve punishment, having only followed its own instincts, nor will its death deter other animals from doing the same.

We may also notice the connection of this command with a regulation about the use of animal food, the main purpose of which seems to have been to impress the same idea. At man's creation he was limited by God to the use of vegetable food. He had very probably taken leave to indulge in animal food. But it was not until after the flood that God gave him permission to do so. Why, we need not stay to inquire. Our present concern is with the remarkable limitation that was imposed upon it—a limitation which the Apostles pronounced to be binding on the Christian Church—namely, that the animal's blood was not to be eaten. Not, of course, that every particle of blood was to be taken away from the flesh before it was eaten (which, if it were possible, would deprive it of all nutriment whatever), but that the main stream of blood was to be allowed to flow out from the arteries, and not to be used as food. Now there can be no doubt that this prohibition had a moral purpose. For we know, from its effects both upon human savages, and upon the most ferocious animals, how strongly the sensual passions are stimulated by blood. But what I beg you to notice is that, just as in the case of the connected injunction with regard to murder, no such reason of expediency is here assigned. In each case the command is based on the deeper ground of an abstract truth. The one, on the ground that man was made in the image of God ; the other, on the ground that the blood is the life. But what reason is this ? Why should not that on which the life of the animal depends be used for food, if the life itself may be taken away in order that the flesh of the animal may be eaten ? We should probably have been at a loss for an answer, but for what immediately follows about the extreme regard, which is to be shewn to the life of men. It seems that conscious life, which

Scripture calls *soul*, and in both the Old and New Testament applies to animals as well as to men, is so high and mysterious a gift from the Creator, that *some* regard is to be shewn to it even in its lower manifestations. Man is at liberty to deprive animals of life, whenever it suits his requirements; but he may not eat that which directly constitutes their life. This however is only a faint approach to the respect that is to be shewn to the life of man made in the image of God. *His life is never to be taken away at all, except by lawful authority*—an exception necessarily implied in the penalty attached to every violation of the command, namely, that the murderer's own life is to be taken away, in order to avenge the insult offered to the Majesty of God.

Now the continued validity of these two kindred laws, is clearly admitted in the New Testament. The Apostles in solemn conclave at Jerusalem enforced upon the Christian Church the necessity of abstaining from blood, and St. Paul says, that the magistrate ought to be a terror to evildoers, because he beareth not the *sword* in vain—the sword being the recognised emblem of the power of inflicting capital punishment. He does not specify murder; but no one doubts that if capital punishment is to be inflicted for any crime, it should certainly be inflicted for that. The same Apostle also said that if he had done anything worthy of death he refused not to die; language, which he certainly would not have used, if capital punishment were unlawful and therefore itself an act of murder.

But then the question arises, whether this law allows of no exceptions. It would be going too far to say that the mere fact of no exception being mentioned, absolutely forbids any being made. Such a rigid principle of interpretation could not fairly be carried throughout our reading of God's word. But, when we observe the emphatic way in which this particular command seems at least intended to include every case, and that the reason assigned for it is not one of varying expediency, which may admit of degrees, but a great principle which applies to all alike, some very strong reason should surely be given for venturing to make any exception whatever—I firmly believe that none ought to be made; that no plea or excuse whatever, should save a murderer from death; that nothing short of implicit and unvarying obedience to the Divine command will produce the effect which it was intended to

produce, and that such a course would have a most powerful effect in deterring not only from murder, but from those violent assaults upon the person, which are in fact incipient murder, and which ought themselves to be punished with tenfold the severity with which they are now treated.

If you begin to make exceptions, see what follows, in principle and in practice. The principle—God's principle—you abandon altogether. When you do execute a murderer, it is not because he has taken away the life of one made in the image of God, but because of some atrocious accessories with which the crime has been accompanied. He is suffering not for the murder, but for the way in which it has been committed. You are not avenging the Majesty of God, you are merely ridding yourself of a monster whom you dare not allow to live any longer. And as to what actually comes of it in practice, I dare hardly trust myself to speak. When we see an educated woman carrying on a long series of ingenious, clever, well devised and well conducted plans for scattering death around her, in order to shield herself from the *suspicion* of a vile murder which she had unsuccessfully attempted to commit—when we see that woman allowed to live, on the ridiculous pretence of insanity—we feel that the tragic farce must surely have reached its height—or its depth—and that something must be done if only to save our own character as a nation—from the charge of insanity. That something *ought* to be a bold and submissive return to the law of God; and I fear, that nothing else will save us from the total abandonment with which we are threatened, of even the pretence of paying any regard to it. As long as any man, or any set of men, is compelled to bear the responsibility of deciding, in every case of murder, whether the circumstances were sufficiently aggravated to put the criminal beyond the reach of mercy, as long as the verdict of a jury and the sentence of a judge merely remit the matter to some one else, to decide whether the condemned man is, not to suffer a longer or shorter term of imprisonment, of greater or less severity, but to live or to die, as long as the terrible issue of life or death is made to hang upon the balance that is struck by some high functionary between the certainty of the evidence, the strength of the temptation, the atrocity of the attendant circumstances, and the amount of intelligence which was probably possessed *at the time* by the offender; so long, even apart from the influence of

private pressure and public clamour, will every ghost of a pretence be seized for evading the positive command of God, that "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed;" and so long shall we continue to be shocked at the murderers who are allowed to escape. It is no use blaming individuals, it is the system which is at fault, or rather the tone of public feeling which has given birth to the system. You can expect an honest jury to say, on sufficient evidence. That man has wilfully taken away human life. You can expect a judge to say, I have only one duty to perform, which is to sentence him to death. But you cannot expect any man to bear the awful responsibility of deciding, on his own view of the case, whether the sentence shall be carried out or not. If there appears any reason to doubt that the man actually committed the crime, there ought of course to be a power, which can suspend the execution of the sentence, until after further investigation. But if there be no such doubt, there should be an end of the matter, the law of God should be carried out in every instance. And more, it ought to be carried out as firmly against would-be, as against actual murderers. There is no more monstrous absurdity in our laws, than the distinction that is made between a successful and an unsuccessful attempt to commit murder. If the man succeed you put him to death, if he fail you allow him to live; that is, you punish him for his cleverness, or reward him for his bungling. A man puts the muzzle of a pistol into your ear, and pulls the trigger. If it goes off, he is hanged; if it does not, he is imprisoned for a time. Could the force of absurdity go further than this? All that is wanted to make it complete, is that the manufacturer of the percussion cap, which failed to ignite, should receive a handsome pension for having saved the lives of two persons—the intended victim and the intending murderer. What could induce a sensible nation like ours to endure anything so perfectly senseless, except the fatal determination to evade in every possible way, the Divine law of capital punishment?

Nor could anything less than this, lead to the contemptible folly of trying to make out every murderer to be insane. Any one who is sane enough to be at liberty, is sane enough to be held responsible for his actions. If he is not sane enough to be responsible, place him in confinement at once, and don't wait till he has committed some terrible crime. No plea of insanity

should be listened to for a moment, in the case of a person whom, up the time of the crime being committed, society had treated as sane by allowing him to be his own master. Besides, as was remarked to me very lately, half-witted people are just as capable of being deterred from crime by the fear of punishment, as any other people. And if they are more likely than others to be inclined to commit serious crimes, it affords all the stronger reason for giving them no hope of escaping the consequences.

But then it will be said, that we should have heart-rending cases, which would make everyone, with a particle of human feeling, shed tears of pity for the poor creature about to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Undoubtedly we should. But are we to shrink from everything that gives us pain? Does the bitterness of a medicine show that it is not salutary? Does the severity of an operation prove that it is unnecessary? Those very executions would have more power to produce the impression, which God's law on this matter is intended to produce, than all the executions put together that take place under our present system. People think little more of the execution of a brutal savage than of slaughtering a wild beast. But suppose the case, that perhaps of all others would stir compassion to its depths—the execution of a young woman, who, in an agony of shame and despair, had taken away the life of her new-born child. What effect would that have? How many lives would be saved by the sacrifice of that one life? How much of the sin which leads to such crimes would it deter from? What reverence for the Authority of God, and what regard for human life, would it tend to promote, by showing that even in such a case the Divine sentence must be carried out in this world however God Himself may be pleased to act in the next. Every such execution would probably save a dozen murders, and as many suicides. And to shrink from it, is no sign of love, either to God or man, but only an instance of the selfish sensitiveness, which prevents a parent correcting his child; which makes him willing to incur the risk of inflicting a permanent injury upon the child's character, in order to spare his own feelings. He cannot *bear* to correct him; that is, he is so selfish that he *will* not bear it. In the same way, the sickly sentimentality of the present day, cannot bear to shed blood even when God commands it,—though it is freely

shed in torrents at the dictates of national pride. An execution is such a horrible thing! Of course it is; and it is meant to be so. Sin is a horrible thing; and it is just to impress *that* upon all the intelligent creation that it is made to involve horrible consequences, both in this world and in the next. The capital punishment that man is ordered to inflict here upon the body, Divine power will inflict hereafter upon both the body and the soul of every impenitent sinner. The sentence here, thank God, is not final. The dead man will rise again. And he *may* rise to everlasting life. But if he refuse the life which is offered him in Christ, he will then incur the second death, from which there will be no resurrection—eternal death, the everlasting destruction of both soul and body in hell. And the way in which men presume to commute God's sentence of bodily death, against murderers into imprisonment for life, exactly answers to the way in which they also commute the threatened punishment of eternal death, against impenitent sinners, into perpetual imprisonment—penal servitude for ever in hell. They have changed that most striking image of destruction, Gehenna, the burning valley of Hinnom, into a convict settlement, where those who are consigned to it never die, but live for ever in immortal vigour. But God will not thus trifle with His own words, whatever man may do. The wages of sin is *death*—not imprisonment for life. The soul that sinneth, it shall *die*—not live for ever in misery.

And for what will that capital punishment be inflicted? For murder; and for nothing else. And who is a murderer? He who loveth not his brother. The whole law is comprehended in one word, Thou shalt love. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Every loving spirit will live for ever. Every spirit that has shewn itself inaccessible to the highest manifestation of love—that of God in Christ—will be blotted out of creation, and “perish everlastingly.”

We have all sinned, and our lives are forfeited. The forfeit must be paid. For without shedding of blood is no remission. But the forfeit has been paid. The blood has been shed. And to every one of us is now offered freely, without money and without price, redemption through Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. God grant us all grace to put forth the hand of faith, and take of that tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

A S e r m o n

BY THE

RIGHT REV. THE

LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER,

(*THOMAS LEIGH CLAUGHTON, D.D.*)

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 3, 1872.

"Is there not a cause?"—1 Samuel xvii, 29.

We are surrounded here with the proofs, if proofs were needed, of a people's heart-felt thankfulness to Almighty God for His great mercy. By the acknowledgment of all men, has God the Father bestowed upon the Nation, at a somewhat critical conjuncture in its history, the greatest mercy, by restoring to health, in a remarkable manner, from a dangerous sickness, him in whom its hopes and destinies centred.

The scene which some of us witnessed in this very place on Tuesday last, will never fade from the remembrance of those who took part in it. The whole feelings and circumstances of the time will remain impressed on the heart of England, and will go down with the records of her history to our children and our children's children.

I address myself to another matter, and I ask of you all, to what cause it is owing that the building in which our Sovereign, representing so worthily the Nation over which she rules, and her Royal Son, after his recovery, returned their thanks to Almighty God for His mercy ; why this building so magnificent in its dimensions and so elegant in its proportions, lacks, not so much the splendour, but those tokens of love toward the House of God and the voices thereof, which now almost every Parish church in this country, certainly a vast and increasing number, evidence in their ornamentation, their general order and comeliness, and whatever flows from love and thankfulness in the worshippers ?

It so chanced in the past year, that spending a day in a city on the Continent, one among the many cities of the empire to which it is subject ; no mean city, and yet not for a moment to be compared with London in the wealth of its inhabitants, or in material power : the city of Mayence : I saw its Cathedral, which only a few years since lay in dust and decay, now being restored and redecorated in a manner worthy of the purposes to which that and every other shrine in the Christian world is dedicated—the worship of the Saviour. The arches which I myself saw, but a few years since begrimed with dust and dim colourless perspective, now glow with bright and cheerful hues.

Kneeling as I did on Tuesday last in an assembly of Princes, Nobles, Merchant Princes, and Traffickers, who have taken their place among the honoured of the earth, by reason of their skill and sagacity in business ; kneeling, I say in such an assembly, under the dome of this great Cathedral, itself a monument of thankfulness ; itself a witness to the piety of an age which is too much despised, I could not help asking myself : why the House of God in which these noble Princes offered up their praise and adoration to the Giver of Life, did not bear even in its outward aspect those palpable signs of the nation's belief in those inspired words : "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine." Is there not a cause ?

CHURCH SERMONS.

Now, we cannot say that it is the weakening of the nation's faith ; because at no period in our history has there been more love to the House of God, and the voices thereof, displayed in church building and church decoration than during this present.

In our great Universities, at the very time in which we might suppose that less regard was paid to Divine worship than of old, when attendance at prayers is no longer required from Students ; and, what is far more startling, when those to whom the tuition of these Students is entrusted, and upon whose example so much depends, are rarely present at the early prayer, which is really the family worship at the College Chapel ; at the very time when we should expect men to be slack in the restoration or adornment of the Sanctuary, it has turned out, on the contrary, that as much as sixty thousand pounds sterling has been expended by one college in Cambridge, and very large sums by several of the colleges in the sister University, on the rebuilding and restoration of the Chapel. Coupling this with what has been done ; and, thank God ! which still is being done ; in our Parish churches, we cannot think that the national reverence for the Sanctuary, which is one of the fruits of Faith, is at all diminished or impaired. Why, then, does this House of God, on which all eyes have just been turned ; in which the devotion of thousands of hearts has been poured forth ; which stands in the very centre of commercial activity and the realized wealth of the foremost city in the land ; why does this House of God remain in the same state in which it stood when London was not a tenth, nor a twentieth, nor one hundredth part of what London is now ; before the wealth and abundance of the nation flowed into it ; before the skill, and industry, and science had so vastly increased every productive power ; before Asia, Africa, Australia and America, had contributed to feed, and support, and employ the multiplying inhabitants of these Isles, cast off once, cut off once, utterly, as the Roman poet described them, from the whole world but now the recognized leaders of its affairs ? “ Is there not a cause ? ”

CHURCH SERMONS.

It is to this meditation I shall confine myself in the remarks I shall make to-day, by desire of the Dean and Chapter of this Cathedral, who have deserved so well of their countrymen and fellow-citizens. "Is there not a cause?"

First. That which has become the very law of life, to those whose occupations lie in this city, is the cause. How shall they who rising up early in the morning, come in hither for the day and prosecute their business eagerly; the day being scarcely long enough for their varied employments and engagements; and return at even-tide to spend the remnant of their time with their families; and so take rest, return each and every day to the same routine of hard work and scanty relaxation, and who are never, or very rarely, in this city on the Lord's Day? How shall they who have never, except on some special occasion, on the week day, entered within these gates; and when, perchance, they have been present at Divine service, have been struck with the coldness and irreverence (brethren, I speak of days never, I hope, to return) with which the highest business in life; the adoration of the Redeemer; the business which shall outlast all others, is conducted; who have seen carelessness, unconcealed in every department of the Divine service, and have been wholly scandalized, when they might have been deeply and lastingly impressed; how shall they to whom the present zeal, learning, eloquence, devotion, and strict performance of duty which have been exhibited in them who bear office in this Cathedral; to whom all this has only just become known, has only just begun to be felt; how shall all of these be touched at once by the appeal which has been made to the wealthiest city in the world to decorate and adorn its Cathedral? And mark what has happened: not so much individuals, although a great many persons moved with the spirit of piety have largely contributed; yet not so much individuals, as the Guilds and Companies of this ancient city, moved by their feeling of responsibility of the trusts which have been committed to them, have responded hitherto, to the appeal, made more, as it

were, on public grounds than because the individual members of these very Guilds and Companies felt in their hearts as they entered into this house : "How dreadful is this place ; this is no other than the house of God, and it is the gate of Heaven." Yet this is the feeling out of which the reparation of thousands of our Parish Churches has proceeded. Till this feeling, or something akin to it, shall have been generated by the holy and beautiful services, the soul-stirring discourses, the zealous endeavours of those to whom the ministration of holy things is intrusted here ; till every officer of this Church, from the lowest of its door-keepers, through all the grades of appointed servants, both lay and clerical, to the highest in charge, shall be found diligent, reverent, holy ; not until then, can we hope that the wealth of the city of London will be bestowed, in proportion to the readiness with which it has been on the great objects of charity which are continually promoted here—on the embellishment of St. Paul's Cathedral.

But, do I say this as doubting whether such results will be seen or not ? Do any of you doubt it ? I trow not. Either the spirit which is at work in many minds to destroy ancient institutions, and desecrate every consecrated thing will prevail, or these consecrated places, and the ministrations which are conducted within them, will justify the foresight of their first founders, and bring forth fruit, as I may say, in their age. Which of these two contingencies is the more likely ? Destruction and desecration, or renovation and the purification of the sanctuary ? When the Jewish dispensation was drawing to a close, the Divine word was, "Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down ;" but foreshowing what would come to pass after those days, the Lord said, by the voice of the last prophet : "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, thy name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place shall incense be offered unto Me ;" and revealing unto his servant John, in Patmos, issues still more remote, and what should ensue in

the final restitution of all things,—His word was: “Behold I make all things new.”

I ask you to cast your eyes over this whole realm of England ; upon restored, rebuilt, and newly-built Churches, upon the revival of holy ordinances, ministrations, services of praise and prayer, frequency of communion ; upon the growth of institutions which have for their object the mitigation of sorrow and the relief of need and necessity, the instruction of the ignorant, the help of the helpless, the conversion of penitents, the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked, the housing of the homeless, aiding the sick in body, the bereft of reason, sight, speech, strength, the maimed, the desolate, the orphan, the friendless and destitute persons ; I ask you to look upon these multiplying on every side, and to consider how many instruments have been raised up to carry on these works of mercy, and then to answer this question :—Whether we have need to hold our hands in despair of any good ; or may be permitted to take courage ? What has been the impression produced on the mind and heart of this nation by that dispensation of Divine Providence for which we thanked God in the week passed ? The lesson which was on every preacher’s tongue, was echoed in every hearer’s heart. There was a pause of deep significance in the Nation’s life while we waited the issue which we felt to be in God’s hands. We were not like that king of Judah who, in his disease, “sought not unto the Lord but unto the physician.” But while we remembered that the physician’s skill is the good gift of God, and that there is a time when in their hands there is good success ; while we remembered this, we waited in prayer and humble dependence, for God to bless the means used, and restore our Prince.

It was not only holy men and women, specially engaged in God’s service, but the whole Nation which waited : they who live at ease, they who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, they whose ordinary thought is pastime and amusement, they whose very life is hard drudgery, waited alike. Men felt that

CHURCH SERMONS.

joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts, were incompatible with the attitude of prayer and supplication. I do not exaggerate, brethren God brought us marvellously and mysteriously to a sense of our entire dependence upon Him. Had the issue been different, we should have said, with the patriarch, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." As it was, we felt that our prayers had gone up on high were accepted and answered, and if ever thanksgiving were as the voice of one man, surely ours was, when we heard of our Prince's restoration and safety. But there should be a thank-offering, there should be something done to justify the truth of feelings which are true; and what is done should be something to which men might point in after-ages and say: That was done when the heir to the throne, the hope of a great nation was given back, raised up from the gates of death. I humbly submit that what her Majesty the Queen and our Prince have inaugurated by their gifts might be gracefully taken up now, first, by the wealthy of this great city, and afterwards by the nation. Though this be an external work only, it is a fit channel in which the nation's wealth should flow; because it is the house of God, Who has given us our hearts' desire, and has not denied us the request of our lips; because it is the central place of worship, whither the great ones of the land and all that could find entrance resorted to offer their united thanks and praise; because, having received the great mercy which we desired, an opportunity seems to be offered for doing this work.

If, as all men say, loyalty to the throne, and the kindly affection of men of different classes and creeds, one toward another, belief in God's overruling providence, have been quickened and revived amongst us by this answer to prayer, is there not a cause why we should hand down to posterity some visible proof of our thankfulness? Whether it shall be done or not, depends at this moment on the sentiment and conviction of the people. They have it in their power to perpetuate the memory of this time, to decree that the House

where their thanks and praise to God were offered shall bear some proportion, in the beauty of its decoration, to the wonderful material prosperity wherewith God has blessed us; and that as the first building of this Cathedral was the record of a great calamity, which issued in undoubted good, so its completion according to the mind and design of the great architect who planned it, may convey to future generations the strong impression just now made on the mind and heart of the people of England, that God is as near to us in the things that we call upon Him for as He was to that highly-favoured race whose very surname and appellation is, in itself, a record of the answer given to persevering prayer: "Thy name shall be no more called Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power, with God and with man, and hast prevailed."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 17.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. FRANCIS PIGOU, M.A.,

Vicar of Doncaster.

PREACHED ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, PICCADILLY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 1872,

In aid of the St. James's District Curates' Fund.

"What are they among so many?"—John vi, 9.

What were they, indeed, among so many? Five thousand hungry men and women to be fed, and only five barley loaves and two small fishes to be divided amongst them all. The thing seemed impossible; and the question itself seems to have been asked in a tone which showed that the mind of the speaker almost scouted the idea that more than just a very few could have their hunger appeased. And yet, that which seemed so unequal to the great emergency, was made to more than satisfy the multitude by Him who simply took these humble materials into His hands and blessed them. He bade His disciples bring to Him what they had and what they could find. Some, probably, went about the task in that faith which they had already acquired; some simply in obedience to His Divine command; and then, that done, His mighty power as Lord of all created things is manifested. He first takes what is brought to Him, insignificant and inadequate as it seemed, and hardly worth the taking, and He does with it what no one there could have anticipated. Five thousand people are filled, and then they gather up the fragments that remain, and with those fragments they fill twelve baskets!

We will not dwell further on the familiar details of this miracle ; but rather, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seek to single out some of the many instructive lessons it conveys, each of which, taken out of its setting and examined by itself, has its special adaptation. First, as showing forth the power which each individual has in this world for good, and what he is capable of, if he exercise that power something, in fact, far beyond our immediate observation or anticipation ; next, as it applies to that which I have to bring before your notice this day, namely, the District Curates' Fund in connection with this Church, so endeared to my own memory from my eleven years' ministry in it ; and then, as it may be exercised for good in the details of your own daily lives.

If we would consider briefly the subject of this miracle in its highest interpretation, I think we ought to read this feeding of the multitude as merely a figure to represent the mode in which the Disciples were made instrumental in winning souls to Christ. We feel this morning, brethren, and we feel whenever we have to minister among men, that those who have the power for good need to have it impressed upon them more and more in this Age, that each of our separate lives has its own proper place in the world, and its own proper and special opportunities. It is the truth, however, that men and women do not realize sufficiently—often do not understand, in fact—why they have life given to them at all ; why it is that they are spared, while others are dropping around them by hundreds every day like dead leaves from the great tree of life. Still less do they realize their passing opportunities. We find ourselves, each one of us, placed here like a single grain of sand amongst the countless heaps upon the sea-shore ; like a single speck of light amongst the myriads of glittering stars that shine above our heads ; like a single drop in the mighty ocean. We then look round, like the disciples upon the hungry multitude, and ask ourselves, "What are we among so many ?" What indeed ? We leave our accustomed spots for a few years, and the world regards us as dead. The longest life is soon ended ; and at its close, the wave of oblivion comes, and washes away every trace of our having ever lived ; just as the rolling tide washes out a footprint, and leaves the sand as smooth as it was before. We know this, and so we say to ourselves, "What can *we* hope to effect ; what can we accomplish ; what can we do ? What can our little lives be to other men ? What can we leave behind us to make an impression upon the world when we are lying under the grassy sod, all out of sight, and as the old proverb says out of mind ?"

And yet, surely, this is to forget that every one of us here to-day possesses some power and influence, either for good or for evil. No man comes into this world without making it better or

worse. No man passes out of it without leaving some trace of his existence imprinted somewhere upon it ; just as the geologist proves to you that a certain rain-drop fell ages and ages ago, by the impression still existing upon the hardened sandstone. Every star in space contributes to the brightness of the heavenly firmament ; every leaf on a branch helps to nourish the tree ; every created grain of sand was wanted to make up the sum of the sea-shore ; every drop of water has its part in making up the vast contents of the fathomless deep. You and I had never been born into this world were not something to result from our birth ; and you and I are spared to-day, while many others (some, perhaps, in their places here last Sunday) have been taken away, because the work that God has ordained for us is not yet done. Life is a solemn and a sacred trust. Our words, our actions, even our very thoughts, have an eloquence and an influence if we know how to apply them. There is an essence of Immortality in the mortal life of every man. The Present is the growth of the Past, and like the old tree just now budding forth into newness of life, it has its roots of centuries' growth spreading unseen and far away beneath the green turf we tread upon. So, every living man is the seed of a plant whose fruit may be cultured and matured generations and centuries hence. National character is the growth of ages, and we in this century are now moulding the character of generations of English people yet unborn. We take our characters from our forefathers, just as our children's children will take theirs from us. In our national vices we are simply reaping the harvest that was sown for us, ages ago, by our ancestors ; and we, on the other hand, by leading devoted Christian lives, may be setters of examples to an unknown and remote posterity.

Now, if this be so, should it not be the earnest wish of every man that his influence in the world, whatever it may amount to, should rather be for good, and not for evil ; that his example should make the world better, and not worse ; that future generations, instead of suffering the consequences of his evil-doing, should inherit the blessedness of his well-doing ; that his name should be held in respect, instead of being despised ; that when his memory went down to posterity it should be fragrant with the odour of a sanctified life, and not loathsome and repulsive from the foul taint of sin ? If any man be endowed with an aptitude for writing, or a talent for speaking, ought he not to desire that every [thought he pens, and every word he utters, should be for the good, and not for the injury of his fellow-man ? So, if any of us hold an office of trust, or a position which in the eyes of others affords special opportunities for setting them an example, ought not his desire and his prayer to be, every day before entering upon his duties, that grace may be given him

CHURCH SERMONS.

to discharge those duties to the glory of God, and that the power of the lever thus placed in his hands may be exerted for the benefit of his fellow-beings ?

Those of you who are parents, bear in mind that if you do not use your legitimate influence properly, instead of having children who shall, years hence, arise and call you blessed, they will care nothing for your memory, and by-and-by, when your name carved on a headstone is all they will have left of you, instead of regarding you with sanctified affection, they will point to some defect in their own characters and say, "This was my father's fault ; that was my mother's sin."

There are many, I know, who are disposed to regard the work I am urging upon you, as belonging peculiarly to the duty of the clergy, in the same way that the practice of medicine is confined to members of the College of Physicians. It is, indeed, a high and a sacred vocation to belong to the ministry of Christ ; and it is the constant prayer of every earnest man in it, that he may have the privilege of converting even one sinner from the error of his ways. It is a help, an honour, and an encouragement which words can scarcely express, to know that our ministry has been blessed of God, and that a single soul has been brought from darkness to light ; from the love of sin, to the love of the Saviour.

That is the real work we have to do, and a great and blessed work it is ; and this we do at one time by the foolishness of preaching. The spirit of God gives power to the words, and drives home the message of love to some conscience-stricken soul. We do this at other times in the sad hours when we visit the afflicted in the midst of their sorrow, their disquietude and their tears. In earlier years, before the heart has been given to God, we attack the childish heart in its tenderest point, and take it by storm for God. It may seem that this is our work, our conquest, and our success ; but we are only instruments in higher hands, and the opportunity, as well as the duty, is for All, and if not for all in the *same way*, yet in some other way.

You who cannot speak from the pulpit, who have not the same access that we have to the sick and to the sorrowful, you do not have the opportunities which we have, but you have opportunities of some kind that are not less valuable. And in what way ?

First of all, let me impress upon you, brethren, that it is only by the good deeds of others, fortified by the grace of God, that you have yourselves been brought from darkness into light ; made to feel and know that you were dead in trespasses and sin. In the next place, remember that it is not only our moral influence for good that we are to exercise, but the influence to win souls. There may be a force of character and a combination of

many marked and excellent qualities in one person, yet without that special quality. A father, for instance, though not a spiritually-minded or spiritually-taught man, will have a certain confessed influence over the mind of a son ; he may train him up in habits of obedience, truthfulness, honesty, and moral worth. A mother may teach her child (as some of us have been taught) to lisp its prayers at her knee, with all that influence flowing from an affectionate heart upon an impressionable mind which belongs peculiarly to Woman ; but that is not the only influence required to win souls. These things have been done by mothers and fathers before us ; and even the savages teach their offspring some good qualities ; indeed, it is possible even for a clergyman to speak to his congregation without being prompted by the Spirit of God. This moral teaching is, after all, but a basis or foundation upon which to raise the superstructure of salvation by faith. Knowing this, you say to yourselves, "Is this in my power ? Is it not altogether the work of the Spirit ? Can I ever get beyond my merely moral influence ?"

Yes. You may win a soul that by-and-by shall shine in glory ; but it must be by something more than mere moral influence. We must learn the power and the value of Divine grace ; we must have learnt what was our own really fallen position, and that our salvation is through Jesus Christ alone, and Him crucified, before we can truly and surely win the souls of others. We must have felt, and been able to testify to, our own inward and blessed experience of the love of Jesus ; of the wondrous revelation to us by the Holy Spirit of that love which cleanses from the sins of the past, and redeems for all, the eternity of the future. We must know the real nature of what Christ has done for us, and our own souls, before we can win others. It is not merely by this touch, or by that effect, or by some particular operation of moral suasion that we can succeed. How different is the power of persuasion in the man who feels that the Spirit of God has been given to him ! How his soul yearns that all mankind might be brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus ! How he rejoices when he knows that he has done some service in the Saviour's cause ! Therefore, if you would win souls, remember that your own souls must be won first. Then, you can use all the instrumentalities at your command with advantage. Then, you can set about dealing with masses of men with an organised effort, which tries to bring within their reach, within their own doors, the message of the Gospel of peace, and the offer of salvation through Christ Jesus.

There is the work before you ; if you cannot take an active part in it personally, you can give of your money ; and some of you, perhaps, occasionally of your spare time, like those earnest Christian men and women who are now to be found in almost

every parish in England. District visiting, teaching in schools, the devotion of your days to the work of the Lord, may not be possible to you; nay more, you may not be qualified for it, but you may give, as you are invited to give to-day. You can say, "I will at least try to do what lies in my power. If I cannot work for God I can deny myself some luxury or pleasure; I can go and nail to the cross some gratification; I can then contribute towards salting the parish in which I live, with the salt that sweetens the bitter waters of life. God helping me, I can do something for the souls of the poor that live around me, so that they may have some one to go in and out amongst them, not like a relieving officer or distributor of charity, but one who will see to their spiritual wants."

There is, too, one other thing that you can all do. Besides giving money and exerting your influence, you can all pray for one another. There is a mighty power in prayer, and we have witnessed an extraordinary instance of it of late; one that will often be referred to in future times when we shall be no more. One, high in the land, has been snatched from the grave in answer to a people's prayers. You too can pray that God's blessing may attend and prosper all His ministers' labours at home and abroad, so that there shall be a visible ingathering of souls. You can pray for any friend or acquaintance who is leading a thoughtless or careless life. You can say to God on your knees what you cannot bring yourself to say to your best friend, and you can ask Christ to intercede for him.

You can also do this: you can speak the word in due season. If God has taught you anything that has been useful to yourself, you can use your own experience for the good of others. I do not mean that you are always to be forcing religious conversation upon everybody you meet; but if you have ever lived a thoughtless or, perhaps, sinful life, and God in His mercy has sent some one to show you the folly of your way; if you have ever in days goneby, felt the power of temptation reduced by the friendly counsels of some prudent adviser; if you have ever known trouble of any kind, or what it was to shed tears of sorrow for sin, and your weight of care has been lightened, or your spiritual anxieties removed; if you have by some special means been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; then will you be able to touch the hearts of others by materials drawn from the storehouse of your own experience.

And now, my brethren, as you know by that experience that God in His wisdom and mercy has imparted His grace to you, so do you ask Him to guide you to say or do something that shall do good in like manner to others. If you know of any one who is passing through any great sorrow (and most people speak of their trouble as though such trouble had never before been

known) go to that person in your best hours ; when you feel that the Spirit of God is moving you ; not laying yourself out for the effort, but when you feel in that mood, or frame of mind that something seems impelling you to go and offer your services, like a refreshing shower upon the parched-up seed. Then tell of what God has done for you, and your own experience will perhaps be the means of the Christian graces being developed in others.

You may say that opportunities such as these are not of every-day occurrence. But amongst those who walk with God, and oh ! I pray you remember this, there is a consistency of conduct and a blamelessness of general life which mark them out in the midst of a crowd ; there is a purity of conversation contrary to that which so often shocks the ear in society ; there is a bearing of ourselves in all the relations of life which wins by example, without the eloquence of the pulpit ; which recommends the Christianity we profess ; and which constrains without those affected even knowing what it is that is exercising such a marvellous and magnetic influence over them. You may remember reading of one, who was more celebrated for his wit than his godliness, once saying at an assembly at the Archbishop of Canterbury's, "If I stay here any longer I shall become a Christian man in spite of myself." The real Christians are not the loud talkers, who swagger about their religious experiences as some men rattle money in their pockets. It is not they who do the most good in the world ; but those who show their character and calling by their living example ; who make their presence known and felt, even as the honeysuckle which grows at your window in the summer-time reminds you that it is there, by the sweet fragrance it diffuses through your house. Depend upon it, there is no man who has not a vulnerable place in his nature somewhere ; not one who may not be smoothed and polished like the jewel in the hands of the lapidary ; not one who is not open to spiritual influences properly brought to bear upon him, just as the earth, bound in rigid bands by the winter frost, has to give way before the relaxing warmth of the gentle summer breeze. These are your opportunities, my brethren.

But lastly, if you are doing nothing for Christ, at least remember that you are dying men, and that Death is fast drawing near to all of us. If you are not making the world any better for your living in it ; if you are not influencing for good even those who dwell in your own homes ; do not say you have not the opportunity of examining the state of your own heart. Search that out, and ask yourself whether you have played fast and loose with solemn things. Question yourself whether the Spirit of God has worked by grace within you. If the answer be that it has not,

CHURCH SERMONS.

but that you hope it will, then ask God to help you by His grace, both to learn and to do His will. If the answer be that you are not yet a converted man, then pray to God for your own conversion; that Christ may dwell in you by faith and you in Him; that His blessing may rest upon your soul, and then you will be blessed indeed. Be wise, then, in your own generation. Look round upon the numbers of men you may see about you who are spending their health, their strength, their years,—even life itself,—to gain that which they cannot carry away with them. Remember, also, that in a brief number of years, or days, a few yards of turf will cover all that is mortal both of them and you. Use well, then, the interval that is granted you, for the welfare of your immortal souls.



A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Ireland Professor of Exegesis.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."—Hebrews xi, 7.

The great servants of God, my brethren, as a rule, share in a common stock of thoughts, feelings, resolves, efforts, sacrifices, which lift them, as a class, above the ordinary level of men, and make them what they are. They live in the world without being of it; they look beyond these narrow frontiers for their ruling interests and their deepest motives. In some shape or other, they give up what they see, for what they do not see; they feel beforehand that Life is a thing at once blessed and awful; blessed in its opportunities, awful in its possibilities. They act as men who are in possession of the clue to its real meaning. They know and feel why they are here, and whither they are going; and in communion with the Author and End of their existence, and in doing His will, so far as they know it, by themselves and among their fellow-creatures, they realize the true scope and dignity of their being, and they fertilize the lives of all around them. "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful. For his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law will he exercise himself day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the waterside, that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither, and look whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper." But over and above that which is common to them as a body, each among the servants of God has some distinguishing characteristic. As in Nature, no two flowers, no two animals, no two human countenances are exactly alike; so in Grace, this reflection of God's exhaustless resources is even more apparent, and each who has a part, still more each who is eminent in the kingdom of

grace, has in it a distinct place, and form, and working, which belongs to no other. His character, or circumstances, confer upon him a speciality, which makes him, at least in some respects unlike any who have preceded him, unlike, we may dare to add, any who will follow him.

The great patriarchal figures who move before us in the earliest pages of the Bible are, as a class, naturally clouded in the dimness of a remote antiquity. Of the seven names which are contemporary with Noah, one only attracts a specific moral and religious influence. We pause at the holy life, at the glorious translation, of Enoch. With this exception, there is little to arrest the attention beyond the length of years which was granted to these earliest generations of men. Strange, almost inconceivable, as such longevity may appear, when we contrast it with the existing limits of human life, it is in harmony, nevertheless, with the general scale of gigantic power, which, according to the most reliable evidence relating to the old World, was characteristic of it. Life in that earliest age was comparatively simple, regular, and free from the social mischief and wickedness which came along with amore organised society. The climate, the weather, and the natural conditions under which mankind moved, were probably very different from those which succeeded, and Paradise itself was still recent. So that although in the exercise of his great prerogative, Man had forfeited the endowments with which he had been originally blest; yet some of these, such as Immortality, would abate but gradually, and thus it was that Enoch was translated into eternal life with God, without passing through disease and death. Five generations of ancestors, at least, must still have been living—Jared, Mahalaleel, Canaan, Enos, and even Seth; while Enoch's son, Methuselah, and his grandson, Lamech, had attained an age far beyond that of modern men. Of all the antediluvian life, from the time of the Creation, only Adam had been taken to his rest, only Noah was not yet born. Sixty-five years elapsed between the translation of Enoch and the birth of Noah, and during that interval the moral atmosphere of human history had very rapidly darkened.

This result appears to be due to two main causes, beyond and above the constantly self-aggravating effects of the Fall. In the fourth and fifth chapters of Genesis, the development of the human race is traced through two entirely different lines—that of Cain and that of Seth. It would seem that notwithstanding the general sense of the phrase elsewhere in Scripture, the Sethites, and not any beings of a higher world, are on this occasion meant by the august title, "Sons of God;" and an inter-marriage between the Sethites, who had preserved the higher and better forms of religion; with Edom and the Canaanites; who had

entirely lost them, issued in the rapid moral degradation of the posterity of Seth.

Distinct from this, but contemporaneous with it, was the appearance of the Giants; they were tyrants, it would seem, physical natural monsters—men who made the law of Might to be the governing force in that primitive society. The corruption of the old world was therefore traceable to two causes, each in its way fatal to the moral well-being of man. It was traceable on the one hand to social oppression and cruelty; on the other hand to a reckless sensuality. Lamech felt the evils of his time; it all seemed to him to flow, as it did flow, from the Sin which had been brought about, and from the curse which had been pronounced in Eden. He felt the burden of his labour upon the ungrateful soil; and when his son was born, we read of the father's melancholy, together with a profound presentiment of some brighter future, in the name of the infant, "and he called his name Noah, saying, this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Noah's general and lofty piety is described by the same phrase as Enoch's—"He walked with God." This expression denotes more than that which was used in a Divine manner of Abraham. Abraham was to walk, and did walk before God. Still more carefully should it be distinguished from walking *after* God, the phrase by which Moses enjoins obedience to the commands given in the Divine law. To walk before God is to be ever conscious of His over-shadowing and searching presence; but to walk *with* God, is something higher and more blessed even than this; it is to be, as it were, constantly at His side, and admitted to His confidence; it is to be admitted to a close and intimate communion with Him as a dear personal friend. It is to be in spirit what the Apostles were in flesh, when they shared day by day in the streets and lanes of Galilee, the Divine companionship of the Incarnate Son. It is St. John's "fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ." It is St. Paul's "being quickened and made to sit together in heavenly places with Jesus Christ." Once only besides, does the phrase occur in the Old Testament, where the Prophet Malachi applies it, not to the Israelites generally, but specifically and distinctly to the conduct of the Priests, considering that they stood in a closer relation to God than the rest of the ancient people, and could enter the Holy of Holies, and have intercourse with the Sacred Presence which was there veiled from the public eye.

Noah's piety, then, was of an exceptionably lofty kind; he is said to have been a religious man, and perfect in his generation, and in the midst of the general corruption he found favour in the eyes of the Lord. Of this temper his thankfulness after

his deliverance is a sample; in order to express it he sacrifices some of the little store which he had saved from the general wreck, and a sentence in the Prophet Ezekiel implies that he had special power as an intercessor with God. Yet his intercession is classed with that of Job and Daniel, and his thankfulness was both in form and the spirit of its manifestation, an anticipation of what is shown in other instances as that of Moses; and Holy Scripture, with its wonted simplicity and truthfulness, describing his falling in his old age into an error, does not place him in this respect above the level of other servants of God. We have, then, still to ask, what it was wherein Noah's excellence more particularly shows itself. And this question is answered in the passage we are considering, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, omitting all else—and there is much, which the history of this great patriarch suggests—bids us observe, that "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith."

Indeed, it is to this period in the life of Noah, that all the allusions to him in the New Testament, with the one exception of that of our Lord in St. Luke's Gospel, consistently refer. In the mind not only of St. Peter, but of our Lord himself, the "days of Noah" were specially that most critical period of 125 years which preceded the deluge. It is possible that the social or political interests of his life may have been greater at an earlier or at later periods, it is certain that the intensity of its moral interest centred in this.

In Noah's building the ark at the command of God, there are three main points to be considered. It implies, first of all, that he had an earnest conviction of the sanctity and greatness of moral truth—a conviction which, more than any other, is the basis of religious character. He was surrounded by a populace which had broken altogether away from the laws of God. Impiety, impurity and licentiousness, were the order of the day. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually; the corruption was universal and profound. To numbers of men, this surrounding atmosphere of evil would be simply destructive to the moral sight. Those of us who know anything of our own hearts and characters must know this, how easily we get accustomed to the sight of what is wrong—how soon we feel complacency, or something like complacency, towards it—how it undermines our sense of its own malignity, and makes us, if not exactly its captives, yet its tolerant apologists. "Neither did they abhor anything that is evil," is a severe and exceptional condemnation of the Psalmist. It is not that evil triumphant, as in Babylon, crushes out the

remaining righteousness in the land ; there it is, and we take it for granted in ourselves and others ; it is part of the actual sum of human life and activity—nay, it is a very large part ; in our hearts, too, it finds something like countenance and sympathy. What is the good, we say to ourselves, of finding fault with the weather, or with an epidemic ? We may wish that things were otherwise ; we cannot but resign ourselves to take them as they are, and this acquiescence in evil, as inevitable, involves a something beyond ; it leads us to shut our eyes to what the deepest and truest of all human presentiment, apart from the revelation of God, points to as its certain consequences. It blinds us to the fact that it must be followed, at some time or other, by punishment. Could it be otherwise, God would not be God, a necessarily and intrinsically Moral Being. Could it be otherwise, the first and most earnest forms of belief in conscience would be untrustworthy. And yet we may by familiarity with this indolent sympathy of evil, learn first to forget that evil leads to punishment, and next, and not improbably, even to deny it. It is inconceivable, we say, that a world-embracing mass of evil should be punished : *its very universality is its safe-guard and its protection ; it might be punished if it were an exception, it must escape simply because it is the rule.* This is what we secretly say to ourselves. We shut our eyes to a first truth of morals, and we flatter ourselves that we naturally escape the effects.

It was against this tacit and fatal influence of a corrupt moral atmosphere that Noah's life was a protest of resistance. "He was," the Bible says, "perfect in" or among "his generations," and these generations were corrupt." He was a preacher of righteousness when righteousness was at a discount and peculiarly unpopular. He walked with God when mankind at large had forgotten Him. He did not think the better of evil, of its real nature or of its future prospects, merely because it was practised on a large scale and with considerable apparent impunity. To Noah, the eternal truths were more certain than the surface appearances of life ; he was certain that evil was evil, and that it could not but be followed by chastisement, because God was God.

Such a moral conviction it must have been which fitted Noah to receive the Divine prediction of a coming deluge. God does not take the morally deaf and blind into His confidence. The words of Jesus Christ sound through all the ages of human history as the voice of a Divine and presiding Providence : "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," he whose moral senses are really alive, let him listen to the proclamations of God's truth. To those only it will be made known. "He that willeth to do the will of God, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of

God." . . . Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet, he was the subject in some way—it were folly to attempt to determine in what way—of supernatural communications ; it may have been some sensible voice from without, it may have been an unmistakably Divine operation, when God said unto Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, behold I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood. Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life under heaven, and every thing that is in the earth shall die, but with thee will I establish My covenant." Why should Noah believe this prediction sufficiently to act upon that command ? Because God had spoken ; that was his reason, that was his conviction, it was enough for him, he needed no more. But then his conviction of the unchangeableness of that truth, and of the moral laws of God, would have rendered such an announcement, under the circumstances, to him at least morally intelligible. It was true that what was foretold, was to come unprovided by any past experience. In the burning plains of central Asia, the idea of an universal deluge may well have seemed the wildest of imaginations. A thousand years, at least, had already passed, and there had been nothing like it. Nature seemed to be unvarying in her movements, the sun rose and set, the seasons succeeded each other, the generations of living beings appeared and passed away ; there was a limit, so to call it, a regular period traversing this in a discernible and provided order, but as yet there was nothing that met the sense to warrant the expectation of a vast or overwhelming shock or catastrophe. Why should it be otherwise hereafter ? why should this accumulated experience go for nothing ? why should this sense of security, so amply warranted, be succeeded by apprehensions and distrust, for which, as yet, the annals of the world afforded no parallel ? The answer was, that God had spoken. Who that believes in a real living God can plead observation in the divinity of nature against the avowed will of the Author of nature. After all, this invariability, so to call it, appeals rather to the Imagination than to the Reason ; the imagination becomes so accustomed to it, so moulded by it, that it undergoes a certain distress at the very thought of its violent interruption ; but reason, true reason, is ever mindful of the limits which must bound even our widest observations. Because we observe a continuous sequence of similar effects, it does not follow as an absolute certainty ; it at most amounts to a very strong presumption, strong in proportion to the range of our observation, that these effects will continue. We are not really in possession of knowledge respecting any great necessity rooted in the nature of things, which makes it certain they must con-

tinue, and if we believe that the Almighty Author of nature is really alive, and that He is a Moral Being—and not merely an Intelligence, still less merely a Force—and that as a moral being He may have grave reasons for disturbing altogether this physical and social sympathy which encircles us, we shall not then distrust Him if He tells us that He means to do so. And so it was that Noah was moved, as the Apostle says, with fear, with a fear most reasonable, as it was judicious; he did not treat the warning he had received as if it had been only some evil omen, appealing at best to his superstition, but he prepared an Ark to the saving of his house.

This event, in which Noah believed before it came, was appealed to in a later age by St. Peter, as furnishing a reason for believing in a still, to us, future and greater catastrophe. St. Peter is writing at the very close of his life, and already a sufficient time had elapsed since the Ascension of our Lord to allow for the foundation of systematic doubts respecting His second coming to judgment; doubts which were based upon the apparent endurability of the world and of the laws of life. Where is the promise of God's coming? men asked in that generation, too; all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The Apostle reminds those who argue thus, that Time has no meaning for the eternal God, and that to apply our notions of the difference between greater and lesser portions of it to His Majestic providences, is to forget that there is simply no such thing as succession in His unbegun, unending life. "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing—that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

But if Christ's delay meant nothing but His long-suffering, the unchanging order of the world could not be urged as a reason for this unbelief in the catastrophe of a future judgment, because the past history of the world contained at least one eminent example of such a catastrophe. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were opened, the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." In other words, water had been the instrument by which the surface of the earth was moulded; water had been one of the constituent elements of its well-being and productiveness, yet at the creative word of God, from being a servant and blessing, it became an over-mastering force and scourge; and what had been, might yet, would yet, be. Another element had yet a work to do in God's Providence, and neither the lapse of years nor yet the observed regularity of Nature were any real reasons for presuming that a final catastrophe would not come at last. "The heavens and the earth, which are now" says the Apostle, "by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Nay, it is very possible that with a higher knowledge than that which we at present possess, we might be able to extend the argument by additional illustrations.

Some years ago it was usual to refer wholly to the time of the Deluge the more ancient animal remains which had been discovered in caverns or beneath the surface of the earth, but more recent Science urges that these remains simply imply, at least generally, a higher antiquity, and are found under circumstances for which no universal flood would sufficiently account. It may be so. But is there anything in the text of the Bible which obliges us to narrow down to 6,000 years, *or in any way whatever distinguish the measure of the earth's antiquity, short of admitting its absolute eternity?* On the contrary, between the original creative Act and the description of that gradual process, by which through successive periods (*days* they are called in the Eastern idiom) this world was brought into its present state, there is room for a measureless interval, I should rather say for a *series* of intervals; and if this be so, who shall say that many of the animal, it may be some of the apparently human remains, which are now pointed at as hostile to, or at least as damaging to the faith of Christians, are after all only relics and records of by-gone catastrophes of which, previous to the Creation and present order of things, this globe has been the scene, and by which the ages of probation accredited to moral beings who have preceded us here, were by the judgment of the great Moral Ruler violently closed.

It is true that we are here altogether in a region of hypothesis, but I submit that there is at least nothing in Revelation which necessarily contradicts it; while if it be true, it yields support to the argument of the Apostle, it justifies the generous faith of the Patriarch. Not that Noah's faith had anything to do with such speculations; religious men may be glad to harmonize their convictions with the advancing and often inconsistent conclusions of human knowledge, but the foundation of their faith is one and invariable; they believe that He who made the world can control it, and when His purpose is clear to them they do not allow themselves to lose sight of it simply because their imaginations are powerfully impressed by the spectacle of a settled and common order of continuance or execution. They are, therefore, in their deepest sympathies *independent* of scientific arguments, without being at all *indifferent* to them; they walk by faith, and not by sight; they are certain that whatever difficulties may be urged against God's declared Will at the moment, God will, in the long run, justify Himself to men, and will vindicate the wisdom of those who in days of trial or darkness have taken Him at His word.

To be concluded in No. 18.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 18.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Ireland Professor of Exegesis.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."—Hebrews xi, 7.

(Continued from No. 17, page 272.)

A third point to be observed in Noah is his perseverance under difficulties. His faith was a practical principle, and it upheld him in the face of serious discouragements. He might have easily persuaded himself that there could be no real necessity for his personally exerting himself; that the threatened disorder would scarcely touch one who was already 480 years of age, that it would be enough to warn his children of what was coming, when he himself would probably have been laid in his rest. Why should he arouse himself in such advanced life to so great an effort as that required of him, instead of leaving it to be undertaken by younger hands? The answer in his conscience was, that it had been said to him, "Build thee an ark of gopher wood."

Again, he might naturally have dwelt upon the great mechanical and constructive difficulties of such an undertaking. It is not to be supposed that these were left to be found out for

the first time by Modern criticism. How could such an ark be built so as to secure at once sufficient space and safety? How could it be provisioned, lighted, and worked? How could the several representatives of the animal races be so gathered as to enter it? How would it be possible to preserve them under conditions of weather and temperature so unlike their own? And when the scourge had passed, how would it be possible to enter again upon the earth as solitary colonists, amid traces of so gigantic a desolation? Well may Noah's heart have sunk within him when God said to him, "Build thee an ark of gopher wood," yet he only lived to obey. Moreover, Noah had to begin his work and to continue it, not merely without active support and sympathy, but under the eye of Public Opinion which was not so much hostile, as contemptuously cynical.

What was this extraordinary outlay of labour and skill for? what was its purpose and meaning? How was it other than the crotchet of a mere visionary fanatic? Did he really think that his fancies would become true, and that the settled order of nature, as well as the civilization and progress of human life, were going to be buried beneath the flood which he dreamt of? Was every one else wrong, while he was right? Was his private opinion to be weighed against the collective experience and judgment of mankind? How they must have mocked at the entire undertaking, how they must in their aversion to the awful idea have revenged themselves upon its form and details? What airy criticism must have been lavished upon it, and on each detail supplied to it, and on its complete structure what bitter comments must have been passed. Its uselessness, its ugliness, its utter opposition to the whole current of contemporary thought and feeling. How, too, to some of the more liberal critics would it have occurred to endeavour, as if in scornful and condescending pity, to enter, although only remotely and for a moment, into the strange hallucination that could have produced it, as if surveying from afar some mental curiosity, which only did not move anger because it ministered so largely to amusement. And then with what satisfaction, complacence and confidence would they have betaken themselves anew to the life against which this Ark was a protest and a warning, as to that which was warranted by the common sense and judgment of the time, and by a force of custom and of sentiment, which, as the world grew older, was daily gaining new strength.

Our Lord Himself has said that what took place then is an anticipation of what will be, on the eve of the last judgment. "As it was in the days of Noe so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man, they did eat, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day came when Noe entered into the Ark and the flood came and destroyed them all." Yet, there

was delay, a delay of 120 years, but the threatened judgment came at last, "the flood came and destroyed them all." Whether it was a strictly universal or something less than a literally universal deluge; whether it covered Ararat without covering, for instance, the Himalayas; whether it can be possibly explained by any combination of known causes or only by simply natural ones—these are most important questions, but they do not touch the broad limits of the general fact, still less the moral interests of the narrative; they would only lead us away from it. What is important is, that the judgment *came*—it came to vindicate the morality and sovereignty of God; it came to justify Noah, and to contend with the generations which rejected him; it came to demonstrate the folly and wickedness of the ancient civilization, the uncertainty of that Nature which seemed at the time so well founded and so strong. There must have been upon that day a murmur—an outburst of surprise and alarm—a struggle—an agony—a despair—when this was realized. Poets and painters have endeavoured to pourtray it, but as the mind dwells on any such vast picture of human agony, the heart grows sick and the head giddy. In that very multitude, no doubt, there were degrees of responsibility and guilt, known, too, and weighed by the Eternal Justice. The Apostle hints as much, in the significant expression which apparently implies, that on the descent of our Lord's human soul into the place of the departed, there was a preaching, at least, to some of the repentant spirits of the antediluvian world. But the general result is a contrast between an overwhelming judgment and a signal mercy—a judgment provoked by forgetfulness of the given law and knowledge of God—a mercy awarded to faith in His word—a faith which was not sacrificed to false and narrow views of duty, or to base misgivings, or to the current and corrupting opinions of the time. What Noah's work really and mainly foreshadowed, would have been obscured in *his* day, but we Christians look back upon it from a vantage ground, which enables us to do it justice. We see that in the labour and temporal salvation of Noah, there is already the shadow of a greater toil and a more complete deliverance. Looking to our Lord Jesus Christ, may we not, in its wretchedness and yet in its hope, use in a true sense the words of Lamech, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." Like Noah, Jesus Christ was a preacher of righteousness—the Preacher of a higher and brighter righteousness than man knew before. And as Noah built an ark for the saving of his house, so did our Lord build His Church to be the home of His followers, with the promise that against it the gates of hell should not prevail.

His teaching, His example, His works of mercy, His bitter death, His resurrection from the tomb, and His glorious ascension

into heaven, all are steps in this mighty work. The Divine Architect shed His very life-blood in the labour of construction, and at length Pentecost came, and the Eternal Spirit welded all into a consistent and enduring whole; and as the races and sexes and degrees of men passed within it, one after another, at the Heavenly call, lo! there was to the eyes of Faith neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ was all and in all. And although since those earlier days the passions and the errors of men have raised walls and partitions over and above the Divinely-ordained stories within the Divine fabric, yet this most assuredly will not always last, they are but human while the Ark itself is Divine. Even now, too, it floats upon the waters, upon the vast ocean of human opinion and society, and we, without any merit of our own, but by His free grace and mercy, have been permitted to enter it. Over us, too, once was uttered the prayer that the everlasting God, who by His great mercy did save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water, would look upon and sanctify us, that, being delivered from His wrath, we might be received into the ark of Christ's Church, and being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, might so pass through the waves of this troublesome world, that in the end we might come to the land of everlasting life.

It would be useful to insist, before we end, upon one or two practical conclusions which are suggested by the life and work of Noah. It suggests, first of all, a particular form of duty which at certain times of the world's history may press very heavily on the consciences of public men, whether in Church or State, and at certain terms in life upon all of us, however retired and private our place and work may be—I mean, the duty which may arise on our seeing, or believing that we see, more or less clearly into the Future, which has to be provided for or provided against. Indeed, to endeavour to look forward, or to provide in this way, is a part of the work of those who are charged with the maintenance and support of large public interests; it is their business to observe the direction in which things are moving, the forces which are coming to the front, the combination or separation of force which may fairly be anticipated, the general result that will apparently emerge from and succeed the state of things with which they are actually conversant. Here, as elsewhere, to seek knowledge is more or less to learn; and God teaches us through our natural powers of observation and reflection, as well as in other and higher ways. The prayer to know enough to be able to do His will in our day and generation is answered. And it may be we have to deliberately anticipate very much, to which we would

be willingly blind. Such a habit of looking forward, if its motive is something higher than mere speculative curiosity, will not interfere with the duties of the present hour, nor will it militate against that general temper of trustful resignation, which those who see furthest and deepest feel, and which is ever ready to leave its hopes and fears in the hands of God.

In private and worldly concerns, such foresightedness is not often undervalued. No man, for instance, continues to invest his money in an undertaking, recommended though it be by an imposing prospectus and an influential Board of Directors, if beneath its fair promises and apparent prosperity, he can clearly see at work the causes of a coming bankruptcy. But where the interests of others are only or chiefly concerned, it may be probable that the man himself will have passed away before his anticipations are realized ; it is possible for him to find himself in Noah's moral position, to this extent, that he foresees a catastrophe which is hidden from the eyes of his contemporaries, and which imposes on him the plain duty of preparing to meet it. And then comes the trial ; will he bestir himself to obey the behest of his conviction, or will he indolently fold his hands and let things take their course ? Will he say to himself, " After all, this is no particular concern of mine, it is the concern of everybody, why should I in particular be compelled to put myself out of my way in a matter which interests hundreds of other people quite as much as it interests me ? Why should I be taxed,—heavily taxed,—on the score of my far-sightedness, while others can go on easily and quietly, with a perfectly good conscience, only because they are too unobservant to see or to try to see, beyond the next turn in the road of life ? I will let things take their course ; there is no necessity on my part for an interference which will be mocked at till it is justified, and then even when it is justified will soon enough be forgotten." Will he reason thus, or will he reflect that knowledge, insight, far-sightedness, if they really exist, and are known to exist, constitute responsibility ; that he who as a man sees further and knows more than others, cannot merely be as others before his fellow-men or before God ; that together with knowledge, at least of this kind, there comes to a certain extent, the forfeiture of that particular species of liberty which is the moral bound of ignorance ? Will he reason thus, and act upon his reason ?

My brethren, this is a most critical question—possibly for the generation, for the country, for the Church to which he belongs, but certainly, under any circumstances, for himself. Can any one who has a heart at all, think without true sorrow of that King of France whose reign covers the greater part of the last century, who spans the interval which connects the great Monarch with the Bourbon who died upon the scaffold. Few

things in history are more piteous than the contrast of the youth of much interest and promise, and the advanced life of abject dissipation. Yet Louis XV. was not wanting in penetration. Even the gay revelries of Versailles did not wholly blind him to sights and sounds which might have convinced a less observant ruler, that the foundations of the great depth of national life were surely breaking up, and that a new order of things was imminent. Allowing for the difficulties of a traditional position such as his, may we not believe that an earnest and well-considered effort, to improve the condition, and to assert the rights of the lower classes of the French people in the middle of the century, might have saved France from the torrents of blood in which the inevitable revolution was baptized. Yet Louis the Fifteenth passed away his time morally and physically in pleasures, which ministered only to the satisfaction of the hour, while the mutterings of the approaching storm were falling thick upon his dying ear, and his last and deepest conviction found expression in words, which were too surely to be fulfilled: "After us the deluge."

Nor can we walk the streets of Oxford, and know anything of the history of the buildings which meet our eyes, without encountering another illustration of the matter before us. During the two centuries which preceded the Reformation, there were men in England who felt that a change of some kind was surely coming, and that it was their duty to prepare for it. They could not, indeed, read history with our eyes; they could not look forward into the future as we look back upon the past, they knew not whether *reformation* or *revolution* was before them; but at least, come what might, it could not but be well to gather together and to cultivate the higher learning of the time, under the guidance and stimulus of religion, and it was to this Christianity of theirs, that we owe the foundation of some of the noblest colleges in Oxford. It may be that the highest aim of their great legacy will not be handed on in its completeness to the generations that will follow us, and yet it may be the duty and the privilege of our day, under other and yet not altogether unlike circumstances, and on a humbler scale, to leave at least one Institution in Oxford where human learning will, centuries hence, we trust, be blest by Christianity when we in this city shall have passed to our account.

And from the State and Education, it is natural to pass to the Church. Nearly forty years have elapsed since some of the purest and loftiest Spirits that ever breathed the air of this place, saw in the suppression of some of the Irish Sees a call to prepare for more serious emergencies. They, too, might have said, and, as clergymen, might well have said, let things take their course, we will leave the work, and struggle and protest to those who are

in the high places of the Church. But this insight into the future, such as it was, was their own, and they could not, if they would, transfer to others the responsibilities attending it. They saw that the real cause of the present disorders, lay not in any exceptional irreligion on the part of the State, but, in the fact, that Churchmen were at best half-hearted in professing their creed. Samson's locks had been shorn, and who could wonder that the Philistines were upon him? If the Church was to be loved and worked for in the years to come, it must be by men who saw in her something nobler and Diviner than the mere plaything and creation of Parliament and Statesmen; something more than *one* of the many human organizations designed to promote co-operation among believers in Christ. These men saw that the Church, to be upheld, must be really renewed. Yet they would have failed observantly, if they had endeavoured to re-invigorate a faith which they knew to be untrue. In their stirring belief, that whatever came of it, they must go forward in their simple severity, lay the secret of their strength. Out of the old materials which were ready to their hand they set themselves to build an Ark of fresh and strong convictions to a younger generation, they laboured by all the avenues to public thought and feeling that they could possibly command, to persuade their contemporaries to *mean* the Creed which daily passed their lips, and meaning, to *act* upon it.

It may be true that that great movement has been pushed to unwarranted and lamentable consequences. It may be true that its original principle has been in some cases even corrupted and perverted, that it has indirectly created not a little distrust and confusion. What is this, but saying, that its originators and projectors were human, and that they enjoyed no guaranteed exemption from human liability to error. But look at it generously, look at it as a whole, look at it, as its opponents themselves, I dare to say, will look at it, when in the clear daylight of history it can be viewed without any disturbing influences, and it will be said—it must be said—to have simply saved the Christians of England from an impending death, whether of spiritual atrophy, or spiritual hysteria. It has borne a tide of life, the life of earnest conviction, through all the arteries and veins of the Church of this land. Aye! and thank God! beyond it. It is, year by year, at this moment, feeding that life which alone can enable serious Christians to combat with the speculative and political anxieties of the future. He who exclaimed at the sight of Oxford, from Bagley, forty years ago, "The flood is around, but the towers as yet are safe," saw clearly what was coming, and now that he has gone to his blessed rest, it is not too much to say that he has done more perhaps than any other one man in these latter times, to enable us to look

forward to the prospects of this rising flood, if not without fear, on the score of our own possible disloyalty, yet certainly without one moment of misgiving as to the general and final issue to the Kingdom of Christ in England.

It is easy to exaggerate the importance of the Age we live in—it is the settled inclination of self-love which moves us to do so—yet after allowing for this propensity or weakness, we can scarcely doubt that the *present* is a period of exceptional importance, whether to the State or to Religion, whether in England or in Europe. Scarcely a year passes but we hear the crash of some time-honoured throne or institution; and around us are taking place silently, but with astonishing rapidity, vast political and social changes which cannot but lead to much loss in the year to come.

To be entering on the full powers of life at such a time may be a high privilege or an unutterable misery; it all depends upon whether a man has the heart to feel its moral solemnity. Alas, for those who at such a time can expose noble names and ancient orders to an unjust public condemnation, which will make it at least difficult to link the Past surely with the Future. Alas, for those who can see clearly, and far into that which is patent to most of us, yet who treat this far-sightedness of theirs, if not with a reckless levity, at least without feeling one true thrill of desire, to lend a hand towards making an ark of safety for truth and goodness in the future. For each Christian soul there will be,—*there is*,—some share in the work of Noah to be taken, and they who work most in silence, and most unobservantly, may have at last the largest share with the blessed Patriarch.

And, leaving public interests and duties, there is one sense in which each one of us must build his ark, and that quickly. To every man Death is the deluge, and Life is the time given him wherein to prepare to meet it. If we would not sink, then, beneath the waters, we must build the ark *now*, and we have much less than the one hundred and twenty years of Noah in which to build it. What if this brief, this blessed period, is passing fast while we stand aside watching the toil of others, either with indifference or in scorn? What if, as St. Augustine said of some Christians in his day, who outwardly worked for Christ's kingdom, while their hearts were not really enlisted in His service—what if our heart is only with the mercenary Canaanites whose services the Patriarch enlisted to build the Ark, in which, when the day of trouble came, they were not allowed to enter?

Let us look into this matter, if it be for the very first time, this Lent. Let us lose no more days, *no not one*, in setting to work, and let us take heed *how* we set to work.

CHURCH SERMONS.

"The work of salvation," says St. Augustine again, "must be built by Christianity out of the wood of Christ's Cross." We cannot ourselves furnish either the design or the material, and if God will not save us by ourselves, He certainly will not save us without ourselves, without our corresponding, that is to say, with His purposes of bliss and mercy. Yet if He is with us, *it matters little* although the clouds are sensibly darkening, and although the foundations of the great deep already are breaking up; *it matters little* though all be submerged before our eyes, beneath the rising tide; if on the strength of His Word we know and are sure, that with a brief voyage across the troubled waters, our feet will rest upon the Eternal Mountain, and we shall take our part in that song of thanksgiving which will have no end.



A Sermon

BY

THE REV. EDWARD HUSBAND,

Curate and Precentor of Folkestone, Kent.

PREACHED AT ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, CANTERBURY,

ON FRIDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23, 1872.

"By their occupation they were tentmakers."—Acts xviii, 3.

There is no country perhaps, save Palestine, connected with so many sacred and hallowed associations as Arabia. It was the home of Job; it was trodden by the feet of Moses and Elijah, amongst many others, of whom, I have not now time to tell. But it was a land of deserts; of weary, barren tracts; of wild, rugged mountains; and vast sandy plains. The sky, especially in the deserts, was generally cloudless; and a hot, fierce, burning Sun shot down its rays upon an arid soil. And at night star-light would illumine the rugged rocks, and shine down upon the encampments, here and there, of the Arab tribes.

The inhabitants of Arabia have, from remote antiquity, been divided into two great classes, namely, the townsmen including villagers and "the men of the desert." From the nature of the country, these "men of the desert" are necessitated to lead the life of wandering shepherds, and since the days of the patriarchs (who were themselves of that occupation), the country has been traversed by a pastoral, but warlike people, who live, not in fixed houses, but in *moveable tents*, from which circumstance they received from the Greeks the name of "dwellers in tents." We read of these moveable tents in Isaiah xiii. 20, where, speaking of the terrible desolation of the great Babylon, it adds,—*"neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there,"* so great was to be its desolation.

But also the patriarchal fathers of the Israelites were dwellers in tents. In Genesis iv. 20, we read—"Adah bare Jabal; he was the father of such as dwell in tents." The first tents were made of skins, as it says in Exodus xxvi. 14, "Thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins." Tents of linen were, and still are, only used occasionally, for holiday or travelling purposes, by those who do not habitually live in them. The patriarchal tents were probably such as we now see in Arabia, of an oblong shape, and eight or ten feet high in the middle. The kind of place usually chosen for the erection of the tent, was, if possible, near some well of water, or beneath some shady tree. When the Lord appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, as "he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day," he offered to fetch a little water while the angels rested under a tree (Genesis xviii. 4). Once again in Judges iv. 5, we read of Deborah, a prophetess who dwelt under a palm tree.

But now, to refer more immediately to our text, St. Paul having left Athens that wonderful city, the birthplace of Plato; the school of poets and lovers of song he came to rocky Corinth, where stood waving to and fro in the sun-lit air, the beautiful cypress groves. And there he "found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome); and he came unto them. And because St. Paul was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought; for by their occupation they were tentmakers." On the Sabbath day he preached, persuading both Jews and Greeks, of Jesus and the Resurrection. During the week the great Apostle stood as a labourer, working at his tents, as St. Chrysostom observes—"St. Paul after working miracles, stood in his workshop at Corinth, and stitched hides of leather together with his hands; and the angels regarded him with love, and the devils with fear."

There is one objection here which I must notice. It may be argued from this by some, that a priest of the Church of God may employ himself in some earthly calling during the week. I grant it *may* be done; but only under certain very peculiar circumstances. St. Paul, though he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, probably lost, at his conversion, all his estate, his friends, and his wealth. He suffered the loss of all things that he might win Christ. So he was obliged to provide for his necessities by the work of his own hands. As he himself says—"Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." (Acts xx. 34.) It was not honourable to the Corinthians, that it should have been so. Their "lack of service," was not what

ought to have been expected from them ; but so it was. And thus we find the great Apostle of the Gentiles, standing in the Corinthian workshop, joining with Aquila, in the making of tents.

But, for a sermon, I have said enough upon the history of tents. I now leave the accounts of this tent life of the patriarchs of old ; of the Arabs in their sunburnt homes ; and of St. Paul in his workshop at Corinth ; and I pass on at once to consider the question : Are not we, Christians of the nineteenth century, in some sense like the Arab shepherds, " dwellers in tents ? " Have we no moveable habitations ; no sure abiding-place ? Do we never (as it were) when the evening sun goes down ; and the birds go to their rest, pitch our tent beside the wells of water, or beneath the foliage of some overhanging tree ? Is it not true, may we not, at least some of us say—

" Here in the body pent
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
A day's march nearer home ? "

The world is like the Arab's moveable tent. " Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come " (Hebrews xiii. 14). I have read of cities (who has not ?) which have taken centuries to build. Of magnificent temples ; of massive mansions ; all made of the strongest, most enduring material, that they might laugh at Time, and endure as long almost as time remaineth ! Oh ! men called them lasting ; they boasted of their strength ; but, Sirs, they were but " moveable tents " after all ! Where are they now ? Tell me, where is the ancient Corinth ? where is Babylon the great ? where is Laodicea ? Where are they ? " Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, is, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It is not inhabited, neither is it dwelt in from generation to generation ; neither does the Arabian pitch tent there. Neither does the shepherd make his fold there ; but wild beasts of the desert lie there ; and their houses are full of doleful creatures ; and owls dwell there, and satyrs dance there. And the wild beasts of the Islands cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant places ; her time has come ; and her days are not prolonged " (Isaiah xiii. 19-22). Where is Laodicea ? Why, now " not a single Christian resides there. Not even a Turk has a fixed residence on the spot. A fox, discovered by its ears peeping over a brow, was the only inhabitant seen by a recent traveller. It is even more solitary than Ephesus ; for Ephesus has the prospect of a rolling sea, and now and then a white sail to enliven its decay. But Laodicea sits in widowed loneliness. Its temples are desolate ; its stately edifices are now peopled only by wolves and jackals." Men once called it a strong,

mighty city ; large, rich, and splendid ; but it was but a moving tent after all, like the Arabs—it has passed away ! Aye, and would ye mock me, if I compared your own far-famed city of Canterbury, with its beautiful Cathedral, sacred to all Catholics, to an Arab's tent, instead of to a sure abiding-place ? Think ye the picture very far stretched, and very improbable, which one of our great writers has drawn, of a coming day, when the New Zealander shall watch the ruins of our great Metropolis from the broken arches of London Bridge ? I trow not. For the cities of the world—aye, the great world itself, is but *a tent*, pitched here by God, for a brief, passing day, and then to lie ruined and desolate, until the Day of the restitution of all things !

But *my* life, *your* life, my brother, my sister, is like the Arab's tent. How often do you and I hear the passing toll sound out from the old church tower ? Shall I tell you what it says everytime it moans, and cries, and wails through the air ? It says, "*Another tent has been moved, and pitched upon the Eternal shore !*"

Do you know what the tale is, which every nightfall brings, when men lie down to rest, and God sends them—poor labouring men and women—sweet sleep, and rest from weary labour ? When the voice of the Guardian Angel, by that worker's bedside is heard to say—"Thou shalt lay thyself down in peace, and take thy rest, for it is God only that maketh thee to dwell in safety ?" Why I will tell thee,

"Such words have power to quell
The restless pulse of care.
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.
Thus the night shall be fill'd with music,
And the cares that conceal the day,
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently, steal away !"

Yes, life is like a shepherd's tent. Moving at every even tide, to be pitched elsewhere. Tents are being moved to-night ! To-night, out in yonder darkness, unbrightened by earthly sunlight ; now, as the winter wind plays with the bare boughs, and birds and beasts are taking their rest, *now*, now while I speak, tents are being moved ! It is calculated that every minute, somewhere in the world, a soul passes away. There is, then, no minute in the year in which some tent is not being removed !

Oh ! that we could realize more fully the fact, that our lives are but as an Arab's tent, to be removed at the break of day ! Passing away ! It is so ! Recall for a moment thy childhood. Where are the friends of thy boyhood—thy childhood ? Passed many of them away ! Where is thy tender father, that prayed with thee, and worked for thee ? Where is thy mother, the love

of thy heart, the memory of brighter days? Passed away! Where is thy husband, thy partner in thy cares and sorrows? Where is thy child, thy first-begotten; thy friend, who was All to thee in thy hour of need? Where? Passed away! Where are thy brother and sister, who played with thee as children, who laughed, and ran, and cheered thee in happy childhood? Where is the old familiar greeting; the well-known footfall? All passed away! The evening had come, though for some, early, very early in the morning the Angels called! and the wayfarers' tents folded themselves up; and the caravan started on its way. And the bells on the camels began to tinkle; and the star-light began to brighten the mountains of the better land; and the tired souls went their way; and the tents were pitched on a worthier soil!

I said just now, that the practice of the pastoral fathers was to pitch their tents near wells of water, and, if possible, under some shady tree. Oh! we Christian wanderers must do likewise. First, as regards the evening of our earthly days. We must pitch our tent beside the wells of waters, and the green, over-shadowing, bending trees. Only those who love our Lord; who have trusted in Him; who have gone to the Fountain of the Precious Blood for pardon, can lay themselves down in peace, and take their rest. They, alone, can pitch their tents beside the living waters; and rest them beneath the foliage of Him, who can shelter them from storm. Then what matters it what is going on outside? Loud may the storm beat; madly may the winds blow; what matters it, if we are sheltered beneath the Everlasting protection of God?

Then, secondly, how blessed will it be at the end of the way, to pitch our tents beside the well of everlasting life; and beneath the green olive trees in the Paradise of God! It is only by a life lived out in Jesus, that we can hope to do this. To work out our salvation in our lifetime, "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, *until the evening.*"

And now I must confine myself to one other thought upon the subject of tents. And to do this, I must for a moment carry back your thoughts to the Tabernacle of old, which we read about in the book of Exodus. That Holy Tabernacle was made on the model of a tent. If you look to the twenty-sixth chapter of Exodus and beginning at the thirty-first verse read to the end of the chapter, you will find that it is as I say. There were the four pillars of wood overlaid with gold. There was the veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet. There was, in the words of the Scripture, "an hanging for the door of the tent." It was a moveable tent, on a large, magnificent scale—the earthly tabernacle in which the worship of the great God was celebrated.

But there is another Tabernacle, called by St. Paul the "true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. viii. 2). In which the same thing is going on, namely, *worship*, and which is in a sense moveable. I mean the Heavenly Tabernacle, the Home of Rest.

But I can hear some one say—"Yes; but not a *moveable* Tabernacle: it is, so the Bible tells, "an *abiding* City." Quite true: but there is another side to the picture. We read in Revelations iii. 12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, which is new Jerusalem, *which cometh down out of heaven from my God.*" And, again, in the thirty-first chapter, and the third verse, where, speaking of the new heaven and the new earth, it says: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Yes, the fire of the great Day of Judgment will not consume the earth. It shall only pass through a baptism of fire, burning up everything on it; and then it will come out of the fire like gold, or silver, purified seven times in the fire. There shall then be nothing on it that shall offend; "an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy, and gladness; and sorrow, and sighing, shall flee away" (Isaiah xxv. 8-10). This is the new earth, upon which the Heavenly Tabernacle shall "descend, wherein is to dwell righteousness." I may also just mention that other remarkable, though difficult verse, in 2 Corinth. v. 3, where St. Paul says: "In this (tabernacle) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked." Then, after the Judgment Day, the Heavenly Tabernacle will rest for ever still. So that you see, as yet, in one sense, Heaven and Earth are moving on, like the Arab's tent—moving on to the Day of Judgment. We, on earth, are all one in this. We differ in our bodies; we differ in our tastes; we differ in appearance; we differ in our creeds. But in this we are, and ever have been, one—we are all tentmakers. The sun stands still, it may be, but the world moves on. God's love changeth not, but the souls of men pass away. God's pardon for sinful men and women is always close at hand, but times change, and moons wane, and seasons pass quickly by. And the sighs and mournings of humanity vary; but the new song of Paradise

is for ever the same. And heaven itself, before (as we have seen), the Last Great Day, will change; and there only standeth out from the crowd of things mutable, the unchanging God! And towards Him all the faithful move! Some with timid, fearful steps. Others with braver, stronger wills. And as we approach the Throne of the Eternal, our tent grows more and more like an abiding habitation, and the nearness of His Presence changes us more and more into His blessed likeness! I would fain stop here. I should like to leave you to-night midst these heavenly thoughts; midst the music of the elect ones, borne like the voices over the crystal sea! You have all been listening attentively to what I have been saying, and I presume by that attention, you have been interested in those great truths of our common Christianity which I have, as far as I have been able, propounded to you. May I hope, that all who have thus listened, and have been interested, are prepared in their souls to pitch their tent, when their "Evening" comes, upon the land of eternal rest with God?

Oh! my brethren, my dear, dear brethren, I bid you, with all the energy I am capable of, to remember, that you are but living in a tent after all! The storm will soon break over you which shall level your earthly tent to the ground. Moving on! Moving on! is the cry all around you! Oh! for thy soul's peace and joy, fit thyself for what is to come hereafter! Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, is thy sole, thy only hope! Trust thyself to HIM, and all will be well; the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear and only Son, can cleanse from all sin! So shall we all, in holy peace, move on to our heavenly rest. Every night, every golden setting sun, will see us pitch our tent "a day's march nearer home." Till, by-and-bye, when the last red even-tide comes; when the last long shadows fall around us; when the last tinkle of the bells on the camels is heard; when the last earthly sleep is taken; then shall our "sun no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 19.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF DERRY,

(WILLIAM ALEXANDER, D.D.)

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, WHITEHALL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 1872.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God to the Saints which are at Ephesus." "As becometh Saints."—Ephesians i chap. 1 v.; also v chap. 3 v.

Most of the words in the New Testament which are familiarly used amongst us, are obviously undergoing a constant process of deterioration; they are becoming lowered in their meaning; they are indeed the expression of the Divine thought; they have come down from God out of heaven, but in their contact with the minds of men they have contracted something of earthliness, and have lost something of their first ethereal purity. Now apparently, at least, the word which occurs in the verses that I have read to you; the word "saint"—apparently, I say, this word "saint" forms an exception to this general rule; for now-a-days Christians of all communions appear to use the word saint in a somewhat higher, and more transcendent sense than that which we find in the New Testament. And, I say this because, that vile form of slang has now, I suppose, passed away for ever; all slang being in its nature temporary and representing some form of transitory vulgarity; that form of slang, I say,

CHURCH SERMONS.

I suppose has passed away for ever, which used to lead men of the world to shoot out the lip and shake their heads, and say about men who lived on higher principles than other men, "I never like your saints; I think that after all they are no better than other men are." Christians of the Roman Catholic communion as we all know, appear to restrict the word "saint" very much to those who after due examination of their virtues and their supposed miracles, have received a sort of patent of spiritual nobility; and who are for the future technically called saints; those who may be addressed in the language of the great old Roman Catholic Poet,

"Thou daughter of the skies
Made in the last promotion of the blessed."

And whom do we, my brethren, ordinarily and certainly so far, not wrongly, entitle saints? When we penetrate through the mists of the past, and look at the company who surrounded our blessed Lord and Master; when we go into some cathedral and gaze through the glorious gloom at the painted figures upon the pane; when we see this form or that form with its appropriate emblem, we say, "that is the figure of St. Paul;" or "that is the figure of St. John. When we take down some of those books which Christendom will never let die; when we read the effusions of St. Augustine, first we are charmed and elevated for a while with its subtle mysticism; we forget for the moment that the word saint, applied to the ancient, simply means an orthodox writer. And thus it comes to pass that while it cannot be said that we use the word erroneously, yet we do as a matter of fact restrict it to those who possess, or who are supposed to possess, very exceptional holiness indeed. We restrict it to those whose faces haunt our imaginations with that deep look of yearning in their spiritual eyes; those whom we seem to see almost in our dreams, with the cross upon their shoulder and the glory upon their brow, winding on through the cloud in a dark path to the very throne of God; that is to say, in our imagination; and in our account, those only are saints who live, and move, and have their being in no ordinary sphere; these elect of the elect, whose souls are like stars and dwell apart; who in the language of a living writer, have been well called, "The very aristocracy of the kingdom of God;" in short in the language of St. Paul, "to the members of a church like the Ephesian Church, are saints or called to be saints," we

habitually apply the term to those only, who in a special and signal way above all the rest of the sons of men, have walked "as becometh saints."

Now it may be instructive, in the first place, to turn for a short time and consider the use of the word "saint," as we find it in the New Testament.

In the first place then, as a matter of historical fact, the word saint is transferred from the church of the Elder dispensation, to the church of the New dispensation; the chosen people, so emphatically an holy nation—a nation whose ideal was that it was a saintly nation amongst the people. The Israelites are repeatedly called, and especially in the book of the Prophet Daniel "the saints of the Most High God;" and together with the privileges of the Elder dispensation, the Christian Church inherits its titles also. So as St. Peter wrote, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy (or saintly), nation, a peculiar people;" and we find the use of this word emphatically recognised in the book of the Acts of the Apostles; thus to take one instance out of several in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and the thirteenth verse, when the Lord appears to Ananias, Ananias answers, "Lord, I have heard by many of these men, how much evil he hath done to thy *saints* at Jerusalem." The meaning of the term saint there, cannot be that Saul picked out those who were pre-eminently holy among the members of the Church and persecuted them; it means the whole body of professed believers; those who called themselves by the name of Jesus or were separated from the world; and towards the close of the ninth chapter and thirty-second verse, and again at the forty-first verse we find precisely the same use of the word "saint." "Peter passed through all quarters and came down to the *saints* which dwell at Lydda;" and at the raising of Tabitha "when he had called the *saints* and widows, he presented her alive." Now this comes out still more clearly, when we look at the use of the word no longer historically; but as may be properly said, doctrinally. Of the epistles of St. Paul, six at least are addressed to entire churches of saints, or called to be saints; and yet when we unfold these epistles and trace their argument we find warnings so solemn, and reproofs so stern and piercing, addressed to the members of those churches, that we can hardly wonder that one is reported to have said, "That the epistle to the Corinthians seemed to him, in spite of

its beginning to be an epistle which was addressed to sinners, and not to saints ;” but the two short passages, which I have read as the text this evening, will I think, if put together show us very clearly that the word “saint” cannot possibly be intended to signify one who is exceptionally holy. There are some communions, among our separated Protestant brothers, who have institutions that are called “Believers’ prayer meetings.” I can well suppose that that must be an institution which to some minds would possess peculiar attractions. It is so very pleasant by a short title of the kind to imply all that you are, or think that you are, and to imply also that which you think other people not to be. It sometimes appears to one who is obliged to take somewhat of an external look at matters, that the Anglican and Insular rigidity which we used to hear so much used as a reproach to the Church of England, is fast passing away ; and that in exchange for it, English Churchmen are giving way to boundless experimentalism, to a sort of plagiarism of every communion under heaven. I venture sincerely to hope, that there will be no plagiarism in this institution of believers’ meetings ; for I am convinced that the table of the Lord, is the only true and scriptural believers’ prayer meeting. But suppose that such a meeting were held consisting of this or any other congregation that you like to suppose ; and suppose that at this meeting—meant and adapted for advanced believers—the clergyman, or leader of the meeting were to take down his New Testament and to open it at that part of the Epistle to the Ephesians which was read as the Epistle for last Sunday ; the very part of the Epistle at which John Newton found his congregation began to ebb away, and almost leave him alone ; suppose I say, that the convener of such a believers’ prayer meeting were to look around upon those whom he saw assembled before him, and looking sternly in their faces were to read out such words as these, “Putting away lying ; be ye angry and sin not ; let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ; let no filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting which are not convenient be heard amongst you ;” and I am convinced that emotions that are not ordinarily considered saintly would arise in the hearts of those assembled before the speaker. They would say, perhaps not altogether without reason, that he was guilty of cruel irony ; of a most bitter piece of unfair sarcasm ; that he had assembled

them as being pre-eminently saints, and had treated them as though they were pre-eminently sinners. But if the word "saint" in the Epistle to the Ephesians was intended by the Apostle to mean advanced believers, those who are pre-eminently of saintly character, it appears to me that this is very much the course that St. Paul would have pursued in writing as he did in the fourth and fifth chapters. We, therefore, on the whole conclude that the term "saint" means professing disciples of Jesus Christ, those who have been separated out of the world, or baptized into His name; and it would appear that we are very much in the habit of confining to those who are exceptionally holy, that term which St Paul addresses to all the members of the churches to whom he writes. Nor brethren, can we possibly, do what we will, restore the word exactly to its original use; and possibly in some respects it may be well that we cannot do so, but let us endeavour to derive profit from it by looking fixedly at its original meaning. The main idea of the word here translated "saint," and very often translated "holy" in other places; is beyond all doubt the idea of separation and yet of dedication; the idea of consecration, of separation, of dedication of those who are baptized into the body of Christ.

My brethren, there are many controversies raging around the baptismal font; those who ought to be brethren (in words which we heard in to-night's lesson) "fall out by the way;" but as far as our own Church is concerned, I suppose all Christians of our communion are agreed in this point, that at least baptism does mean dedication to Christ. Now consider for a few moments what this dedication involves. We have an obvious and an instructive analogy in the Jewish temple. That temple as we know was a holy temple. Why was this honour put upon it? It was a material fabric; it was a fabric made like other buildings, of stone and wood and adorned with precious stones; it was made of material things; and when its work was done it was destined like other buildings to pass away, like an exaltation from the earth. But then it was a building that had been set apart from the world to God; it was dedicated to Him; and because it *was* dedicated to Him it was meet for the wondrous ritual which it enshrined. But, my brethren, if this temple—if this material fabric was thus capable of dedication to God, how much more is the human Spirit made in the image of God and redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the shrine it

may be of heroism and sanctity. In to-night's second lesson the Apostle says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." And when did that dedication of body, soul and spirit, to our God take place. The words sound in our ears, "know ye not therefore it is the first principle of the spiritual life; know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death." Here then, observe, is the first and chief element in the idea of the word saint—it is separation; it is dedication to God; and observe that the irregularities even of the Corinthian Christians did not obliterate this title, and did not do away with this saintship; the title still remained, if it were only to condemn them. All were saints; that is, all were dedicated to God, but some defiled the temple of God while others walked as became saints.

But this is not all. There is another word, a rare word in the New Testament that is also translated "holy." The word to which I refer, occurs in the compound word hierarchy, and means nothing less but that the person or thing is consecrated to God without reference to character or moral qualification. It mainly means when applied to a person that he ministers in sacred things. He may be an unholy priest, but as a priest of God that name is given to him still. But in the word which occurs in the text and elsewhere, and which is rendered saint, there is something more than that; the thought lies near to that which is separated by God from the world, and is also separated, itself, by an inner consecration to Him. The word "saint" does not assert what we call saintliness as a fact about all to whom it applies; but it does imply that it is a duty.

Now brethren, I cannot help thinking that this view of the matter is a very instructive one; and for this reason, it seems to take the idea of saintship down from the clouds; it seems to take it out of the region of sentiment and even of that which is heroical and transcendental, and it brings it very near to each one of us. In the first place is it not well fitted to correct that despondency about the Christian life and the Christian character, which is so apt to rise amongst us? When we, the ministers of Christ speak to you, and tell you that you are in a certain sense

saints ; that you at all events are called to be saints ; that is, called to be separated from the world ; called to be pure ; called to be gentle ; called to be holy ; called to be self-denying, one knows very well from one's own heart what the answer of many is. "It cannot be ; I cannot do these things ; I have learned my catechism ; I know that as a matter of theological fact it is true that in a certain sense I am dedicated and set apart to God ; but I cannot be pure ; the chains of habit are coiled round and round me ; that harlot face of sin which looks so fair in the lamp-light of passion, but, so wan and haggard, when God's daylight streams in upon the soul, lures me again and again to my destruction ; I cannot be heavenly minded, the pursuit of business, the babble of society around me ; thoughts about investment and per-centage which I cannot help, and must be, these things have deafened me to all the songs of heaven and I can hear them no longer." No brethren, that which we are called upon to be, we may be ; not by ourselves, but by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. All may have that, there is within each one of us a fountain of life deep as eternity and inexhaustible as God. If there is not inner help of the Holy Spirit what is the meaning of our dedication ?

I remember to have heard from one who was a spectator at the time, of his having once seen a little child playing upon a headland over the sea, who took a telescope from the hand of one near him, and handed it to a blind old sailor, who was sitting on the cliff, and the child asked the blind man to sweep the far horizon and tell him with the glass what ships were there. The old man, however, could only turn bitterly towards the child, with those sightless eyes of his : and it seems to me that you might as well give a telescope to a sightless man, as to give the Bible to a man whom you do not suppose to possess the guidance of the Spirit. You are not called because you are holy ; you are to be holy because you have been called ; and whenever God calls men to a duty or a privilege, depend upon it He gives them the necessary grace.

But again, this view of saintship seems to me to correct many of the false standards of saintship. Some of us may have, perhaps, read in the old Church history the story of a hermit who had passed many years in fasting and prayer to God, night and day, and who had at last, as no doubt frequently happened in such cases, become puffed up with spiritual pride ; and the

man, we are told, in his pride prayed to God, that if there were a saintlier soul than his, or one man who took a more lofty view of the Christian life, that God would reveal it to him by His Holy Spirit; and the legend goes on to tell how the mist fell from his eyes, and he saw in a vision, a dark lane in a great city near; and there in a squalid and foetid chamber, was a shoemaker bending over his last, by the wretched light of a lantern; and the angel told him that "there was one who was far holier than he was." Brethren, not only apostles, missionaries, and martyrs are, and may be, saints of God; nor again, not only such as we read of in modern religious biographies. With all the gratitude which Christians give to modern lives of modern saints, there are some dangers connected with reading their biographies; for is it not the case that many of them are the objects of a morbid analysis and had better never have been printed? At the best it does but show, spiritually, in the same way as some transparent glass enables one to count the fibrous threads which are at the root of the hyacinth, without showing the real life which is unfolding into beauty, colour, and form. Sometimes passages in the life of good people, strike profane persons outside, as if they were occasionally written by those who had their eyes alternately turning towards heaven, and turning round to see who was listening behind the half opened door. A letter appeared lately in one of our great public organs in reference to the death of one whose name can never be mentioned without emotion by any English Churchman—Bishop Patteson—and in that letter the writer said, "Such was the man, and no doubt there are many, who but for his death might have passed away without his worth being known. There are many great and good men, it may be quite as good and great as he, who pass away unnoticed by the world; but that is the very reason why we should be ready to recognize and honour him, who himself looked for no recognition, and no honour; but, as by a terrible flash of lightning was suddenly revealed to us by his death. It is well we should know what stuff there is in the men we meet in common life, doing work and carrying in their breast those lion hearts which neither treachery nor death can force one inch from the path of duty." Such truly, was the man who is described in these eloquent words; and it came naturally to him when the opportunity was presented to be a martyr for the sake of Jesus Christ. When in that great cloud of witnesses with

which we are encompassed ready as it seems to reveal itself and break out into life, the voice comes again and again: Who are those, who are clothed in white robes, and from whence come they; the servant in the house of whom we think but little, doing his duty; the governess submitting to the vulgarity of the rich for the sake of duty; the pure hearted boy taken at school or college from us, who leaves no trace on the world behind; the old man bearing cruel pain so bravely and so gently that those around can scarcely help bursting into passionate tears. Ah! brethren, amongst us in our every-day life there is many a life which, although we know but little about it, is a long lane with no refreshment, where is felt somewhat of the Saviour's agony and sorrow; where the thorn pierces into the brow and the nail pierces into the heart:

"When earth last saw them they were bleeding,
Thorn-crowned, and sore perplexed,
They shall be changed and beautiful exceeding
When we shall see them next."

It has been sometimes speculated that there must be grief to the blessed beings when they miss many in that great throng. Yes, but if we miss some, shall we not also see many; and those whom it may surprise us to see there! When Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired by all that believe, many a hasty judgment shall be reversed; "the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; for many are called but few chosen."

And now, brethren in conclusion, in speaking of the souls of God, I desire not to forget those words which we heard in the second lesson for this evening's service: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid on Jesus Christ; all holiness comes from Him, and Him only." The oft repeated motto of the Elder dispensation was, when God said to His people: "Be ye holy for I am holy;" that is become ye holy, for I am intrinsically and essentially holy.

My brethren, in the great philosopher of old we read of a high and spiritual love, but the love of which Plato speaks is the love which looks to an idea; the love which makes the Christian holy is the love which looks out from himself, and which clings to the person of Jesus Christ. The object of the philosopher is a misty and an abstract one; but the object with us is real and true. Why did not the very experience of this great city a few days ago show us the distinction between loyalty to an idea, and the loyalty which can fasten around a person. Loyalty

to an idea is a great thing ; but there is something far grander and deeper to such beings as we are, in the enthusiasm of love, which falls in passionate tears, and gives strength to the idea also. No mere idea can grasp the soul of man like that deep and perfect holiness in Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin mother, who suffered and died for us, unwarped by our selfishness, and untarnished by our impurity and sinfulness, is the Saint of Saints, the Holy of Holies ; we have an unction from the Holy One, and a chrism from Christ, in virtue of which we may be holy as He is holy ; and, though ever so faintly and feebly, may realize the grand idea contained in our text ; and as by our baptism "we are called to be saints, so let us walk as becometh saints."



A S e r m o n

BY

THE REV. CANON WOODFORD, D.D.,

Vicar of Leeds.

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, WHITEHALL,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 3, 1872,

In aid of the Funds for the erection of the Isle of Thanet Orphanage.

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."—2 Corinthians ix, 15.

These words carry us back through eighteen centuries, to the first great combined effort of almsgiving upon record. The eighth and ninth chapters of St. Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians, are occupied with the subject of the collections then being made among the Gentile converts, for the poor saints in Judah. Whence this impoverishment arose we are not told; but it seems to have been a subject which pressed upon St. Paul's mind, during a considerable period of his ministry, and he organized a general contribution amongst the Gentile churches. In such a contribution he probably saw a gracious tribute of the daughter churches to the mother church at Jerusalem, and the possible means, if the help were lovingly given and accepted, of knitting more closely the bond of Christian fellowship between Jew and Gentile, and exhibiting to the heathen world outside, the power of the Gospel to overcome the antipathies of race, and in Christ Jesus, to make all one. Most anxiously, therefore, he devotes himself to sharpening their zeal by referring to the liberality of the Macedonians, and with extreme care he manifests to the most captious, his own thorough interest in the cause; and then as he dwells upon this giving of the Gentile to the Jew, of Christian to Christian, of man to man, there appears to break upon his soul a vision of the gift of heaven to earth, which lay at the root of all that was kindly, sympathetic and loving in humanity. He passes in a moment, as his manner is, from the depth to the height. The profoundest mysteries are in his mind ever associated with the commonest acts; the relief of the poor, attending to the sick, which recall the thought of that wondrous coming forth of the

Eternal Son, "not to be ministered unto but to minister." The bestowal of alms is the shadow of, and has its origin in the Divine Council by which the everlasting Father gave the everlasting Son; and the thought of that first national almsgiving prompts the burst of praise, which looks far beyond any action of time to the first great purpose of eternity. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Now, we will put aside in the first place, all considerations of wants to be relieved, of religious enterprizes to be supported, to meet the temporal and spiritual destitution which meets us on every side; the high and holy warfare against ignorance and sin, crippled for lack of means. There is a sense in which to do good and to distribute, to be cheerful givers, is essential to the development of the individual Christian life. So that if the cry of the needy did not enter into our ears we should be bound to look out anxiously for some means of sharing our substance with others. How may this be made to appear?

We will go back for a moment to the origin of our being. It is a thought which must at times force itself upon us, as we gaze upon Creation, why was all this made? If I am driven to the recognition of a God, moulding and ordering all about me I cannot put aside the kindred question, wherefore was the primeval silence broken, and the great void occupied? Wherefore was the Eternal Presence filled by ministering spirits going in and out before the Holy One? Wherefore was man shaped from the dust and sent forth with all the faculties belonging to him? Why was the river of life set flowing? The man who shuts out God from his creed, has no answer to all this. The mighty Creation is to him objectless confusion; for he cannot find a *cause* of the creation without God. He cannot either say that life is its own end. If the path of existence were never broken by disappointment or trouble, then might the great action of life be a sufficient cause of life. But happiness is not sufficiently universal for this. If there is success, it is counterbalanced by failure. If there is beauty, it is counterbalanced by deformity. If there is good, it is counteracted by evil. Do we not feel that the imperfection of life as it now is, prevents our accepting it as its own final object?

Let us now contemplate God as the Creator. There was a period, there must have been a period, in the depths of the past eternity when God *alone* existed, when besides God there was *nothing*. What then moved God to create? See you not that He must have existed by Himself? That which hitherto had no existence could not be the cause of the existence of something else. Because God only *was*, therefore by Him the earth was fashioned, the sun kindled in the heavens, and living souls created.

We may advance one step further. When we speak of God

creating all things for Himself, we are not to understand Him as regarding anything out of Himself as being essential to His own happiness. The very idea of God carries with it the idea of a self-complete being. No benefit or emolument could accrue to God through the creation. He did not need any profit or pleasure from without, being filled within. If this be so, to what must we refer, for a motive for the creation? There is but one answer. The exuberant love of God. It is the very essential of love to be communicative and diffusive. Love will not abide in itself: its nature is inconsistent with such a restriction. Love is a bounding river which cannot choose but overflows its banks. The man who has this world's wealth, will not, if he be benevolent, keep it to himself. Well transfer this to God, and the mystery of the creation is solved. There was no constraint from without, but yet God was constrained within Himself. The Being who was both loving and wise, must yearn to diffuse love and wisdom. The Being who has both love and power, must long to dispense them. Abounding in life, God's love must urge Him to communicate life. Had He been infinite in strength and wisdom only, the creation might never have been accomplished, but because He was also of infinite beneficence, therefore must He seek outside Himself recipients of His bounty, and so angels and archangels arose around Him. *It was God's own first alms-giving.* The creation we have said is God's free gift, out of the plenitude of His power and beneficence. In the redemption we have God's Son presented to us, and the giving here is associated further with the idea of self-sacrifice, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." These are the words of Jesus Christ Himself; and what do they imply?

We would speak with reverence, as standing here upon the edge of a deep mystery of godliness, which seems to involve the idea of self-abnegation on the part of the Maker, as though His love for man in his fall, wrung from Him at a cost, the gift of His Son. The same is implied by St. Paul. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things." The greater gift—this is the argument—carrying with it all lesser gifts, because of the cost of the greater gift to the giver. We must not overlook in the familiar sound of appeals like these, the fact that they set forth a real, and not an unreal transaction, although it may transcend our capacity to explain or to reconcile the thoughts which it suggests. It is no unsubstantial metaphor, but a true gift; the gift of the Son by the Father to undergo humiliation and rejection. A gift unlike the primary gift of the Father, which was the overflowing of simple power and love combined, but a gift into which enters,

if we may dare so to speak, a Divine reluctance. So strong was His love, that as St. Ambrose says, "He drank as it were the cup of bereavement;" and from these two Divine gifts of Creation and Redemption, we can understand the principle upon which the final judgment is depicted by Christ as turning upon the exercise of Christian charity.

It may sometimes have surprised you in reading the Gospel of Saint Matthew, that the final acceptance or rejection of men should depend upon whether they have clothed the naked and fed the hungry. But it brings in the thought, that just in proportion as we yearn to have something out of ourselves to whose wants we may minister, whose feebleness we may support, with whom we may share our own resources; just in proportion as we can make these words our own (not offering that which does not cost anything, but yielding up what is most valued by us in order to effect the beneficent purpose of our Lord), in that proportion do we become like the Father. Bring in this thought, I say, and the difficulty remains no longer. The man who lives self-absorbed, finding in his own pleasure, whether it be sensual or intellectual, enough for himself; the man who has no desire to be a fountain of help to a surrounding circle; the man who will sacrifice nothing in order to do this, where in him is the spirit of God? Where the fitness for the presence of God? Christian giving is a shadow of the great secret of eternity, more or less complete according to the self-denial which enters into it, of the unspeakable gift by the Father of the Son. Marvel not if our sympathy with that which lies at the root of the dispensation under which we live, should be adopted by the Eternal Judge as the test of the judgment with which that dispensation is to be closed.

Now so far we have tried to look at almsgiving in its origin let us now turn to it in its practice.

If ever it was especially needful for Christians to cultivate this Spirit of liberal and cheerful giving it is, I must think, at this present time. No single half-century has probably been so marked by the increase of luxury as the last. You may see it in the rapid transformation of the buildings in this great metropolis and in our great towns. What contented our forefathers as places of residence, or of business, or of sojourn, are now utterly inadequate to our ideas of comfort and convenience. So again there is a distinct rise in the scale of expenditure amongst all classes, except the lowest; articles of luxury are of every day consumption which, fifty years ago were reserved for great family festivals. In the agricultural districts you may trace a rapid approximation in the habits of the tenants of the land to the habits of the land owners. You may see another example of the same thing in the way of bringing up children. The boy is not

called upon now-a-days to endure the rough discipline of former times ; it is our effort to get rid of all that makes Education, and the school-life, distasteful. Now, I am not pretending that this is wrong nor that it is even undesirable, on the contrary from many points of view it tends to elevate and refine ; and thus we may observe that many gross forms of vice have disappeared. But there can be no doubt, I think, that these things have a tendency to make men selfish ; that there is an evil in them which requires to be balanced, if the character is not to deteriorate ; the evil of self-indulgence must be balanced by the contrary virtue ; by the habit of looking, not every man to his own concerns, but every man to the concerns of others also. If we would not morally sicken in the close and perfumed atmosphere of our artificial life, we must resolve to come forth and minister to others in heart and act.

The second feature of our age is the obvious tendency to make the mere possession of wealth the gauge of respectability. Is it not true that money has crept into the place that was formerly occupied by rank, and courage, and genius ? And in this again we see the evil of this Mammon worship. This worship is to be met by the beautiful grace of almsgiving ; by living not for self alone, but for others ; this is a truth which the Church of God is established to uphold in an age like our own of immense material prosperity and individual acquisition. But the lesson becomes more pressing if you look at it in a national point of view. The distribution of wealth amongst us is becoming more and more unequal ; the gulf between the rich and the poor is rapidly widening. It is not true that all classes are advancing with equal strides, in that which conduces to the happiness of life. It is not true that the proportion of the rich to the poor remains the same.

For example : it has been calculated, that within the last two centuries the very rich, that is those possessed we will say of about £5000 per annum, have multiplied twelve-fold ; on the other hand, in 1688, one person in every thirteen possessed an income of upwards of £100 per annum ; at the present day, one person only in twenty can be found who possesses that amount. Now you will see these figures at once mark a widening gulf between the rich and the poor ; and the separation of the classes, employer and employed, is made more complete by the increasing tendency of the one, to live out of the districts, in which the thousands whom they employ are living ; leaving them to live alone and apart, from the sympathy and influence, which should be a bond between them ; from the sympathy which should be theirs in sickness and sorrow, and the influences which should lead them to God.

Now if our social system is to hold together ; if the peace and

harmony which have so long been ours as a people are to endure, it does seem to human foresight, as if it could only be by a more widely spread and a more general personal interest of the rich in the poor; by a warmer and a heartier sympathy with the toiling masses around us; or more general desire to lighten somewhat the heavy burden; to scatter somewhat the dark cloud, and to come into personal contact, if it may be, with the sin and misery of our brethren. So only can we do our part in the great Christian fellowship, and imitate in one measure the unspeakable gift of our God. Remember what the whole of our argument has been; every free gift out of our abundance, every self-sacrifice undergone, works up our dull cold nature more and more into the likeness of our God, the Creator and the Redeemer.



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 20.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY

HIS GRACE THE
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

(*Rt. Hon. ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL TAIT, D.D., D.C.L.*)

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1872.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."—Romans viii, 22, 23.

I do not propose to enter here on the difficulties of this difficult passage. The very word "creation," or creature, as it is translated in the nineteenth and twentieth verses of this Epistle, is capable of very different senses, according as it is understood in its limited or its more extended application. Verse twentieth: "For the *creature* was made subject to vanity;" some understand this to mean the inanimate creation involved in the secondary consequences of man's fall, or the creation of the lower animals. Some again, turning to the higher orders of creation, understand the word to mean Mankind: the unconverted races who groan in their ignorance and misery, while they wait for some great manifestation of the Son of God; or of men who are living in a land and age of Light, and yet do not know Christ, and are, therefore, exposed and unprotected from those many miseries.

from which they can only escape in the throes of the new birth—in that spiritual birth enjoyed by Christ's people.

For our present purpose, we need not stay to enquire the exact meaning of each word of our text; for we shall regard the text, at present, as bringing before us two facts, the first of which is set forth in verse the twenty-second: that the real Christian looking without himself sees in all around him the traces of the misery and fruit of sin; and the second is set forth in verse the twenty-third: that the real Christian looking within himself is still troubled—although he knows that God has done much for him, he feels how much there is still to do in the work of cleansing and renewing. Verse twenty-second: "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Verse twenty-third: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." This is, as I understand it, the final and complete emancipation from the thralldom of Sin. No doubt we are quite right to be on our guard against a merely sentimental religion—against making too much of sentiment, too much of feeling, as contrasted with sound principle, resulting in sound practice. The Church has suffered as much, perhaps from the self-deceit, and the assumed or over-strained feeling; as from the self-satisfied orthodoxy, or coldness of the same formal practice, not regulated by the living springs of Religion in the heart. But however this may be, *there is no true religion without feeling*; and the real Christian, whether he looks without or within, must have his feelings deeply stirred, when he thinks how much Sin prevails around him; how much misery is connected with it; how little he is himself able to cope with it through his own abiding sinfulness. The services of this season tell us of the power of sin, and of the boldness of the Tempter who lures us to it. His boldness has been shewn by his assault upon the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. A reading of the Psalms supplies a fair test by which we can measure our spiritual thralldom. Open the book of Psalms at random; turn, for example, to the fifty-fifth Psalm: "I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets." When the Psalmist, depressed with this thought, had cried out, as appears in the fourth and sixth verses of this Psalm: "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me; and I said, Oh! that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest," he does not so cry because of the prevalence of wickedness and the number of enemies who are against *himself*, but rather because

he is pained that there are so many sinners near him, who are the enemies of *God*. The sight of wickedness that festers and grows rank wherever men congregate, is a sad sight for every one who loves God in Jesus Christ. This is a characteristic of the whole book of Psalms: a feeling of annoyance and pain because sinners are so many and so unrestrained. But then David did not confine his dislike of Sin only to the sins of other people, or, to sin in general; but he was pained in consequence of the sins which were his own. Take his own words, in the fifty-first Psalm: "Hide thy face from my sins," (*my own sins*) "and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." The whole book is full of sad thoughts, because sin is still so powerful in *good men's* hearts. No one can read the Psalms as they ought to be read, (and they are always forced upon our attention in the Church's Service;) no one can look upon them as the outpourings of a religious heart approved by God Himself, and by the experience of all the faithful souls who have been delighted with them since they were first written, amongst the Jews and Christians alike; no one can so read them aright without having his feelings stirred within him as to these two matters: First, The prevalence of sin, *without* him; and, Second, The prevalence of sin *within* him.

Now, much of this Epistle to the Romans—this eighth chapter, for example, from which our text is taken—supplies some sort of test by which we can examine our religious feelings. Would to God we were more like David and St. Paul, and not so cold in heart, so easily satisfied with the formal and outward ceremony! Are we right to make anything of this season of Lent, and of the lessons which it teaches us? We are. It is a quiet time even here, in the midst of bustling London; quieter than at other times. A quiet time is very necessary for those who live in the midst of the turmoil in which so many of us are involved. But it is not *feeling* only that constitutes Religion—now-a-days especially. Religion must be tested by its *works*.

The tendency of the Age is to think little of formal faith; but the heart of a man cannot be wrong who is living in the right. The security for a consistent life of usefulness is to be found in the heart which is truly imbued with the feelings of which we are speaking. If a man be pained by the sight of Sin, without and within himself, it becomes impossible for him to remain contentedly inactive while sin is gaining ground; and this feeling leads him to action. The feelings must be real; and when they are real, from feelings they become principles; principles shewing themselves in acts.

How different are the feelings with which different people

CHURCH SERMONS.

will traverse the streets of London ! I have heard it remarked, that passing along any of the great thoroughfares it is surprising to note how many people are talking to themselves. It would be worth knowing of what they are all talking ! Or if they are not all talking, they are all thinking ; the anxious faces of most of them show this. If we could hear these soliloquies we should be let into many secrets of the individual characters of those we meet ; we should be let into the secrets of the schemes with which these individuals' minds have been engrossed during the busy hours of the day.

Sometimes a man is giving vent to what he has not had the readiness to say when it was wanted ; but he has been conning the matter over since. It is some matter which is of very great importance to him, and that which he is muttering is what he *wishes* he had said ; and if we could hear him we should learn what is the fixed impression on his mind. With some, these whispers may be the smattering of a song, speaking merely of the vacant mind. With some, they are, let us hope, ejaculatory prayers to Almighty God. "What an ocean is this in which I am immersed ! What a flood of suffering and sinful Humanity is sweeping past me in these streets ! Can I do anything to rescue, here and there, some drowning sinner from the billows ? The blood of Christ has power to wash away his stains." Now it is the men who have these thoughts, thoughts of the misery of other people, as well as their own by Sin, who I think, will, be the true philanthropists—ready to give a fund of help—who knowing their own troubles are anxious to do something to soothe the troubles of others. Certainly it is remarkable that public schemes of philanthropy, did not flourish of old, even amongst the most polished nations of Europe, before Christ came and put such thoughts into man's heart. There was much done, no doubt, in ancient Rome by public men anxious to conciliate and gain the goodwill of the needy ; but no well-devised plans were undertaken simply for the purpose of alleviating the suffering and lessening the wants of the masses. In Europe, at least, all these things are owing to the spread of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And even now, there are many good suggestions and good institutions borrowed from Christianity by a world which has no love for Christ. I do not indeed, doubt but that you will find some philanthropists, here and there, who are in no sense religious men, and stirred by no religious feeling ; we honour what they do, from the good which flows from it, and we love the men ; but still, generally speaking, if you would have any great and successful movement of benevolence, it must be based on the feelings of Christian hearts, or all its efforts will be vanquished. We do not expect any help, in this respect, from any who have not any Christian feeling in their

hearts. Look at our missionary movements ; not that *all* who join in helping them are influenced by any strong Christian feeling ; but there is an affinity between their efforts and such a feeling. These efforts may become fashionable for a time, and their good object is so obviously proved, that men take some part in helping them. But you cannot rely on their steady maintenance, nor on their long-continued progress, in spite of obstacles, unless they are based on the sympathy of Christian hearts. Look, even, at secular Education. I think we may take it for granted—it has continually been affirmed by those who are best able to judge, by those who have had most experience, and who are quite fair and impartial in the matter—that you must depend on the Religious feelings of the community, if you would have any general system of education supported by voluntary efforts. Those who do not advocate education on religious principles, have certainly never shewn that they are ready to make any great efforts for it. It is only on deep Christian feeling that any successful and extensive system of benevolence can be based.

We come back now to that with which we started : that the sense of human sin and misery lies at the root of all earnest Christianity—that sense of sin and misery which is longing to see an end of it, which St. Paul in this Epistle to the Romans sets before us as characteristic of the Christian. This is the only sure source from which we can expect with certainty that efforts of Christian benevolence can spring, and to them we must look if we would see men exerting themselves for Christ's sake, not by fits and starts, irregularly, but everywhere and under all circumstances.

We live, my friends, in an Age when we cannot but hear much said, respecting the two dissimilar systems of Christianity, which divide the whole of the Religious communities of Europe ; one resting much on Authority, and outward show, and Sacramental and ceremonial usage ; the other, appealing to the individual reason and conscience, and rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people *free*. We hear much, also, of the onward progress of Materialism—of a system of Unbelief founded on Material Speculation, which threatens to trample down both one form of Christianity and the other ; while there stands hard by, the sneering or despairing Scepticism which refuses to join any side in such discussions, contented to wait for another world before it makes up its mind ; confessing, that respecting what concerns the things unseen while here in the flesh, it knows nothing, it will believe nothing. Now, at such a time as this, it seems to be the especial office of the ministers of Christ to urge on men's consciences those great simple truths of the Gospel about which there can be no mistake. My friends, you are

CHURCH SERMONS.

sinners, as I am, judged by your own standard, be it what it may. You have failed, and have failed grievously ; and as you fail, so do those around you. The World *is*, and you who live in the world are, in a terrible position. You fail in doing what you know you ought to do, and you have failed, as St. Paul failed, and all the good men who lived in that age, and from that age till now, on account of Sin ; and sin and suffering are, somehow, always linked together. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come to save you from both. Cease your contentions, therefore, as to the right form of Religion ; cease from the arrogance of your dry logical speculations, and give up your cynicism. Go down to the depths of your being, to your heart and conscience. Is there no voice Divine speaking within ? If there be, though it should speak but in a whisper, be sure you listen to it. Think of the reality of things now, as men think of them on their deathbeds, and then I feel sure you will agree with David and St. Paul ; you will feel and know that you are sinners ; and this will stir you to help others who are sinners with yourselves, but who are not sinners without hope ; because Christ was born, was tempted, and died, and rose again, and ever lives to make intercession for them and for you.



A Sermon

BY

THE REV. CANON MILLER, D.D.,

Of Worcester Cathedral, and Vicar of Greenwich,

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, WHITEHALL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 1872.

“That I may win Christ.”—Philippians iii, 8.

The world has ever shewn curiosity with regard to the inner lives of its great men. We are fond of asking, “What were these men when they were not beneath the glare of the public eye? What were they in the bosoms of their families? What were they when they were alone?” Hence it is that few branches of literature, are more popular than the autobiographies, journals and private letters of eminent men. And the Church, shares this curiosity with regard to those who have been eminent servants of Christ. To so great an extent is this curiosity carried that it has too often tempted survivors to drag forth into publicity, private letters and documents, which have indeed thrown much light upon history and character, but which ought to have remained in sacred privacy. It has pleased God with regard to two of His most eminent servants—two of the most eminent whose lives are recorded in the Bible—to gratify this feeling of the human heart. It need hardly be said, that God has not done this for the mere sake of gratifying idle curiosity, but for the edification and instruction of His people in every age, and for the manifestation of His own glory. You will at once anticipate the two cases to which I refer; the one, King David, “the sweet Psalmist of Israel;” and the other, the Apostle St. Paul, whose words I have read as the text. And we feel, if we know anything of our Bibles, and especially if we are

well read in the Psalter, that David and Paul are not simply to us historic characters on the page of Scripture, moving amongst stirring events and scenes, but we feel that we have been admitted into the inner workings of their hearts. Who can devoutly read those psalms of David, written to describe his own communion with God, and not feel that he has become intimately acquainted with the inner life of David; with all his habits, all his conflicts, all his fears, all his sorrows, all his joys, and all his triumphs? And so with regard to St. Paul. St. Paul is not merely a great personage in New Testament story; he is not merely the inspired penman of a very large and important part of the New Testament Scriptures; but he is before us as the servant of God, with whose inner life, its internal springs and workings we are made deeply intimate. In another Epistle, as you will recollect, he lays before us a complete analysis of his moral and spiritual nature (no one, indeed, who has read this can ever forget it) and tells us what were the mainsprings of his life; the life of a man who has left deeper footprints upon the sands of time than any other man of whom we read. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." And so we come to our text, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things that I may win Christ." Here is the key and the masterspring of all his actions and motives. "This one thing I do (and what is the "one thing?") forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Or in the simple language of the text "to win Christ and be found in Him."

Now in the first place let us ask what is meant by "winning Christ?" And afterwards let us endeavour to ascertain the loss which is involved in this winning?

What then is meant by winning Christ?

Now, it is important to observe here, that St. Paul did not write those words in the first flush and fervour of a new conversion. It often happens with new converts that many of

their impressions and resolutions are like the early blossoms and buds we see bursting forth from every tree at this season of the year, when nature is manifesting her annual bounty and beauty ; but by-and-by come the bitter winds of the succeeding weeks, and a number of these blossoms and buds will perish. These however, were not the first warm impressions upon St. Paul's heart ; it was not the language of a man just brought to the knowledge of his Saviour. Bear in mind, my brethren, that when St. Paul wrote those words, he had been serving the Lord Jesus Christ for thirty years. Bear in mind also, that he had derived no earthly advantage from so doing, but on the contrary had suffered every earthly loss by his faith. He had experienced bitter sorrows ; he had borne pain and persecution, and all those varied forms of suffering which he has himself catalogued in so eloquent and touching a manner. This was all he had gained through Christ as far as his material interests were concerned ; and yet at the end of all these thirty years of tribulation he tells us that the one master-spring, the one all-absorbing desire of his heart, is to " win Christ."

Can any one in this congregation ; can any self-indulgent sensualist, any votary of pleasure, after thirty years in the service of self, sin and Satan, say, that still there is nothing he desires so much as a few more of those sinful gratifications ?

But again, I answer, not because I would split a straw in the definition of a text of Scripture ; but it is no splitting of a straw to say this, that that which was present to the mind of the Apostle was not Christianity, but Christ. " What, you ask, is the distinction ?" I reply, there is a great difference between a man preaching Christianity and preaching Christ. There would be fewer dull sermons and fewer sleepy hearers in pews, if men would preach Christ instead of Christianity. There is a wide difference between preaching a dry system—a mere abstraction—and preaching a living Saviour. You will observe that in the whole of these Epistles, though there is deep argumentation, there is not a single " dry " chapter. There is not, in fact, one chapter of that character throughout the writings of St. Paul, St. Peter, or St. John. Many sermons are very dry. Systems of theology are all very dry. You may go into a theological library and find that a good deal of most orthodox Divinity is

very dry ; but there is nothing dry in the Epistles of St. Paul, of St. Peter, or of St. John ; and I will tell you why. Because there is not a single chapter, and upon this I challenge contradiction, in which you have not placed before you the living Saviour. It is not the *symbol*, but the *living reality* always. Of course I am supposing that there is some interest felt in the subject. And thus we feel that we are brought into contact with Him ; not with some mere abstract truth, but with a living and loving Saviour. Thus may we win Christ ; and this is what the masses of London want, and what all human nature wants ; whether in town or in country ; whether our preachers labour amongst the cottiers on the hill-side, or amidst the seething crowds in our large cities, the message we want to deliver is not the message of dry abstract theology, but the message of a living Redeemer.

But you will observe that the Apostle—and he shall himself be his expositor—desires to win Christ and be found in Him, to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. These are all pregnant and suggestive phrases, my brethren, and especially I would call your attention to this one suggestive expression which, so far as the inner religion of the heart goes, is the very key-stone phrase of the New Testament “in Christ.” I repeat that so far as experimental religion is concerned—the religion of the heart, and of the life ; that is the key-phrase of religion. Whenever you turn to St. Paul’s writings to see what his religion was, you will find it is “in Christ ; in Him.” And this, after all, is only a continuation of our Lord’s own teaching. If you refer to the fifteenth chapter of St. John you find our Saviour saying, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the Husbandman.” “Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine ye are the branches ; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing.” Now, St. Paul’s teaching is simply an extension of our Lord’s ; that is to say that the oneness, the union, and the communion between the soul of the Christian man and his Saviour, is imaged to us by the close and inseparable union of the life-giving root with the fruitful branches of a vine. Sever one of those branches from its stem, and in a few hours it loses its beauty ; all the principles of its fertility

and vitality are gone ; there are no more buds, no more blossoms, no more leaves, no more grapes.

And this is the striking and true emblem of the union between Christ and His people ; and you will observe further that this has reference both to the believer's legal condition before God and to His spiritual life.

I say it has reference to the believer's legal condition before God ; for those of you who are acquainted (and I hope there are none here unacquainted) with this chapter, will know that the Apostle is dealing with two extremes of error ; namely, the extreme of legal error, that is the error of self-righteousness ; or to put it in a phrase that you will all understand, the pharisaic error ; and the antinomian error, of those who would abase the doctrines of the Bible and the grace of God to licentiousness, self-indulgence and sin. Hence you will observe that when he speaks of being in Christ, he does not speak of having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God by faith ; and I have long believed that if men had kept closer, both in the pulpit and in theological writings, to the language of Scripture upon this point, we should have had far less discordance between good men ; I mean as to the justification of the sinner before God. The doctrine of Scripture is this, that by faith man becomes one in Christ, by faith he abides in Christ, as I have just shown you ; and then when God looks upon that man He looks upon him as a man "in Christ." And if any one thinks I am using bold language I would shelter myself under the mantle of one of the greatest and purest writers that ever adorned the English Church, one whose name is never mentioned without an epithet of respect. We never speak of Richard Hooker, but always of the "judicious Hooker," because he always well weighed his arguments and his words. Referring to the justified man in Christ, he says, "So are we too, in the sight of God, as the very Son of God Himself." That is his language on the position of the believer in Jesus Christ.

But you will observe, further, that St. Paul also desires to know and to win Christ in the moral aspect of winning Christ ; because the whole moral aspect includes this, the being quickened from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. There is just this, if you will follow me (and it is worth

remembering), that there is a great distinction between all human morality and the morality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is very true that in some rare instances owing to the light that God has given them; owing to their own sincerity as seekers after truth; owing to the broken gleams indirectly reflected from the light of Revelation, the founders of the various systems of Moralities, came very near to the Realities of the Gospel. It is not true—and we must give the ancient heathen moralists their due—that there is so very wide a chasm between the best of the heathen systems and the morality of the Bible. But what is the grand distinction? That in the morality of heathendom you do not find what after all is the great desideratum—the motive power. We get beautiful precepts to guide us through life, but we want something more. We have to deal with Man in his state of corruption, as a fallen creature, as being far gone from his original righteousness; and the one great characteristic of the scheme of the Gospel is not only its connection with morality, virtue, and good works—which you find duly inculcated in its perfect precepts—but you have that mystical union with Christ by a series of links or bonds of love, so that you have not only the precept put before you, but the motive. The radical idea of Gospel morality, as of all Gospel verity and good works, is the being united to Christ, and all this is the outcome, the living outcome, the development, the manifestation, the energizing of the inner life which is sustained by union with Christ.

And then there is this distinction which may not have struck you all; I mean with regard to the heathen systems which I have spoken of. In ancient times there were of course thousands of followers of these systems; some of Aristotle and his school; some of Plato and his school; just as in the present day there are various sections or schools of moral philosophy, of political economy, of geology, and particularly in regard to our own unhappy controversies in the Church, there are numbers of followers who take the name of this, or that, master or leader. But who ever heard of so uncouth and ridiculous an expression as that a man was “in Aristotle” or “in Plato?” A man may be a Platonist or an Aristotlelian, but you never heard of such a phrase as that. Christ however is not an external

teacher. The power of His morality is not that I simply sit at His feet and follow His example; but, that if I am a Christian man, Christ is in me, and I in Him; and from day to day by the power of God and the Holy Spirit living within me, I am obeying His precepts and following His example.

But now, observe, that St. Paul tells us (and this is one of the grandest passages in all his writings), that there is a loss involved in this "winning Christ." He says "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Now I do not mean to say that the Apostle is here deriving his imagery from the illustration of a shipwreck, but allow me to do it for him in this way. I do not know that we can find a better. Suppose then a splendid vessel to have all but completed a prosperous voyage; she is but a little way from her port of destination; she has a valuable cargo, say worth a million of money on board, and a number of passengers who have perhaps each some treasure of their own in addition. Suddenly, when just nearing home, a storm comes on, and it becomes evident at once that it is a question of lightening the ship or of losing the lives of all. We know to what decision the captain would come, of course. All the cargo, and all the accumulated treasure of the passengers would be thrown into the deep. I do not pledge myself to this as the Apostle's similitude, but that is what he would say; that we must give up everything that is inconsistent with having Christ.

And what had St. Paul himself given up? You very well know, because this chapter tells you; *although if ever there was a man under God's heaven, who could have gone to heaven, so to speak, without Christ it was St. Paul.* And bear in mind that even in the days when he was persecuting the followers of Christ, he was perfectly conscientious; he fully believed he was doing right; a circumstance which should make us remember that the ideal excellence of the present day, namely, earnestness, is not a test of truth. A man may be very earnest and *very wrong*, in the same way as St. Paul was at first; but let that pass. Here was a man who regarded, both ecclesiastically and morally, was everything that could be required. Touching the righteousness of the Law, he was blameless; indeed, he never

would have been at the head of that persecution unless he had been a young man of some note. He gave up all his position and everything; gave up all hope in his own righteousness, and came as a sinner empty-handed and empty-hearted to Christ. For the whole argument of this Epistle is based upon this, that you cannot mix up the two things. You cannot be saved partly by Christ and partly by your own works; partly by grace and partly by merit. "Whosoever is justified by the law, is fallen from Christ." St. Paul counted everything but loss for Christ, and if we want to win Christ we shall find that we must do the same. If we want to rest in Christ entirely and to serve Him consistently, we shall have our faith, our sincerity, and our earnestness well tested. It will cost all of us something. Every one of us will have to give up something. We shall not be allowed to walk to heaven without our cross, depend upon it. Not that we are advocates for Christian men going out of their way to be singular. I would rather say "Let Christian men avoid all singularity and eccentricity, because they ought to make religion as attractive as possible." But depend upon it, no one ever set up to win Christ without the certainty of suffering some loss. The true believer must expect to have to bear ridicule—the hardest thing in the world to the sensitive and proud man; he must crucify his besetting sins; he must calculate upon a life-long struggle with his temper, his lusts and his passions; and he must be prepared at all times to keep his body in subjection. All this is very hard for flesh and blood to do.

Let me ask you then, "How many are there in this congregation who can truly say, as before God, that the one master-desire of your hearts is to 'win Christ?'" How many of us are there who can say, that we have something better than mere Christianity?

My friends, I am one of the last to disparage the importance of having a sound creed; but I say this without hesitation, as God's ambassador addressing you from God's pulpit, that no man was ever yet saved by a creed. Not that I undervalue a creed, God forbid; but I mean to say, that it is not the mere *knowledge* of Christianity and its doctrinal system that is to save us. Still less is it sufficient that we have the miserable

cant of religion upon our tongues—that most hateful and offensive thing—for I think if there can be one thing more hateful and offensive than another, it is the cant of religion upon the lips of the man who has not religion in his heart, and a sincere subjection of his heart to God. I would ask you then is this your knowledge of the Saviour? Were you ever led personally and individually to feel your need of Him?

Oh! my friends, the time is coming to every one of us, and to some of us it will be here very soon, when Christ will be the one great need of us all. If we ever get to that deathbed of ours and lie down upon it for the last time, to rise no more, in that old familiar room which we are never to leave till we are carried down in the soldered coffin, upon the shoulders of men, to be buried in the cold dark silence of the grave, our bodies there to wait the resurrection morn, and our souls the day of judgment; if ever we come to that hour with our reason and senses left to us, and with the prospect of eternity before us, we shall then find that all else but Christ is mere mockery to us. What will be the news of the day to us then? What will be all the pleasures of London, what would be all the wealth of the Indies then? “I am a dying man going into the presence of my Maker and I want some one to support me through the dark valley.” Men and brethren, Christ alone will do that. He will see you safely through the dark waters of death. Ask Him now Call upon His name now; win Him now; and then when we come to that last hour, it may be with us as it was with one of the most saintly prelates of our Church. It is recorded of one of our very distinguished bishops that when he lay a-dying at a very advanced age, his mind was wandering through extreme weakness, and he could not recognize those around him. His chaplain went to his bedside and said “My lord, do you know me?” There was nothing, however, but the vacant stare, shewing that the good old man did not even know his own chaplain and fellow worker. His wife then bethought herself that she would be recognized, and she leaned over the bed and said, “Bishop, do you know me?” There was still however the same blank gaze of vacancy. At last his chaplain in order to see whether the Spirit could be rekindled for a moment, leaned once again over him and said “My lord, you know the Lord

CHURCH SERMONS.

Jesus Christ." And there came just a passing flash of intelligence that lighted up the old man's face for an instant, and then in his feeble accents he replied "Oh! yes, I know *Him*; I have served Him for these thirty years and a Blessed Master is He!"

That good old man *had* "won Christ," and was "found in Him." "Oh! let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 21.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM LAKE ONSLOW, M.A.,

*Chaplain to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, K.G., and
Rector of Sandringham.*

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, WHITEHALL, LONDON,

ON GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 1872.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger!"—Lamentations i, 12.

These striking words express the very extremity of agony and woe; and, yet, if anyone should ask, like the Ethiopian convert of old, "Of whom speaketh the Prophet this—of himself, or some other man?" we, like Philip, might begin even at this Scripture, and from these words "preach unto you Christ Jesus, and Him crucified." There is not, indeed, one of the ancient commentators on Holy Scripture, who does not more or less clearly apply these words of the Prophet Jeremiah to the Passion of the Lord Jesus; and, in truth, it is impossible to apply them in their full and literal meaning to any other person than Christ Jesus, or to any other event than His crucifixion on Calvary's Hill, which we commemorate to-day. Let us then, on this solemn day, with such intensity of feeling as the subject plainly demands from our heart of hearts, learn to consider these sorrowful words—"Is

it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger!" the exclamation of Christ Jesus when suspended, as on this day, upon the Cross.

We know, alas! that many were the careless ones that passed by, to and fro, utterly regardless of the Saviour's sufferings. Multitudes of those whom He came to save passed by, reviling Him, wagging their heads and saying—"He saved others in His life: He cannot save Himself." And, brethren, dare we for a moment indulge the hope that none are to be found in this great Christendom, and that none are to be found even among the most professed disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who still pass by and apparently regard not the sufferings of their Lord and Redeemer, His sorrows, His trials, and His death? Are all our worldly occupations laid aside? Is the pursuit of wealth—are the savings of avarice—is the intense pursuit of pleasure truly relinquished? And is every one among us, who bears on his brow the sign and profession of a Christian, intent only on the solemn duties of this day? Are there none who, by refusing to join in the affecting services of our Church on this sacred and holy day, too evidently prove that they love the world more than the Saviour? that they are lovers of profit or of pleasure, more than lovers of God? Alas! must we not confess that there are too many, even in our own Christian land, who seem to be so thoroughly absorbed by the objects of time and sense as to have neither leisure nor inclination to heed the sad history of the Man of Sorrows? Are there not many possibly too busy, too negligent, too thoughtless, or too sceptical and too proud to bend the knee in prayer, and ponder on the exceeding love of Jesus—even of that blessed Redeemer who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities: upon whom was the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed? We may say, then, "Oh, Almighty God, grant me the abundance of Thy mercy and grace that we who are now assembled in Thy house may never be amongst those who pass by, unconcerned and regardless of Thy most beloved Son!" Oh, may we, year after year, become more and more devoted to Him who has redeemed us by His most precious blood! May we, then, all fully experience the true meaning of

the Psalmist's words, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, if His wrath be kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Oh, be it ours to realize, in all its touching force and convincement, the passion and death of our Redeemer on this day !

In speaking of the deep sufferings of our Redeemer, we shall cast our eyes towards the scene of the Crucifixion itself. Christ had been lifted up on the Cross at the third hour of the day, and now it was noon. Then does the sun shed his fullest splendour on the earth ; and what could be more awful than for darkness to overtake the world at this hour ? Yet it was so now. The tempest of human passions was still raging at the foot of the Cross, when the dismal gloom began to gather in the heavens, and the dusky twilight to creep over the hills and plains and mountains of the earth. In a few moments, the assembly on the hill of Calvary was plunged into night. Every object was now buried in darkness. Many, possibly, in this congregation who, like myself, have been permitted to walk round about Jerusalem, and tell the towers thereof, as many a pilgrim and traveller has done, will remember the perfect view of the Holy City. At this solemn commemoration scene you would see the Mount of Olives on the east of the city, you would have descended the Mount of Olives and entered the Garden of Gethsemane, crossing the brook Kedron, gone up the Via Dolorosa, and followed Him to the scene of the Crucifixion. Then you would observe, that the roofs of the Temple, the valleys around the scene of the Crucifixion, all had vanished ; and nothing was discernible but the outline of the huge crowd, which occupied the summit of the hill, with the cross rising in the midst. Those among us who have visited the Holy City will never forget the realization ; and on this day especially, when it fell to my lot, with others to be present there. It was, as I may call it, a binding and mighty strengthening of one's faith ; the contemplation and study of one's ideal as a boy ; the loved memories of one's Greek Testament, in the life of Jesus ; and their realization when one finds one's-self standing upon that holy ground and amid the teeming memories of ages. One could imagine the blaspheming assembly was horror-struck and stood motionless. So sudden a transition from the blaze of noonday to the darkness of night—from the loud railings of blasphemy to a solemn silence like that of the grave—was

CHURCH SERMONS.

unspeakably terrible. But whence was the darkness? This was not the first time that the sun had been darkened at noon-day; but the ordinary principles upon which the common obscuration of his rays may be easily explained, are not sufficient to explain this long and terrible eclipse. This darkness was altogether supernatural; and, being so, how awful it must have been to those who beheld it! It must have seemed as if Night had asserted her ancient reign, and suddenly arrested the march of the great luminaries of the sky; as if the last hour of time had struck and the end of all things had come. And with regard to those who were plunged into this darkness in the very act of their wickedness, what could they expect, but that the next ray which should fall upon their eyes would be that of the Great Throne erected to punish them for their sins and iniquities?

But it is of more importance to ascertain, if possible, the *design* of this darkness. That it added greatly to the solemn scene cannot be questioned; but we are satisfied that there were other and higher ends to be accomplished by it. It is easy to give figurative explanations of this matter—to speak of the shadow that now covered creation as but the emblem of that terrible frown that rested on the face of the Judge—to ascribe feeling to the sun, and to say that he was unwilling to witness this deed of unexampled horror, and turned away from man's guilty stage to shine on fairer worlds. When the son of a monarch dies the palace is hung with mourning. So, now, when the Son was dying the Father covered the heavens and the earth with sackcloth. But these are only poetical explanations. The true reason of this darkness, doubtless, was to afford a privacy in which the Son of God must suffer in His own soul. Christ died in a public character, and in a public cause; and therefore, He died in public. The Cross was set up on the summit of a hill. An assembly was convened around it, of men of various nations and of various tongues, and an inscription was affixed to it in letters of Hebrew and of Greek and of Latin proclaiming who the Sufferer was. But there is an obvious difference between the publicity which Providence was so careful to give to the external or bodily sufferings of Christ Jesus, and the secrecy which it was not less careful to give to the sufferings of His soul. The spectators around the Cross were but ill able to comprehend the peculiar nature and severity of those sufferings; and had they seen Him

while enduring them, they certainly would have put a wrong construction upon the feelings of distress which He then manifested. On both those occasions, therefore, on which He suffered in His soul, He was withdrawn from the view of man. We remember how He sought the solitude of Gethsemane's holy garden, when His agony was about to commence; and, when there, that He hid Himself even from the eyes of His disciples. But now His agony returns at noonday. The Sufferer cannot now retire into solitude; for He is fastened to the Cross. Must His agony, then, be endured in public, and He be seen of all? No, beloved brethren, God interposes and withdraws the sufferer as completely into the shade as if the hour had been midnight. The command is issued to the sun that he shine not: darkness veils the heavens and the earth. The storm of derision and mockery that erewhile raged so loudly on the summit of Calvary is hushed, and this deep silence remains unbroken, till the agony of the Sufferer is at an end. "Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over the land until the ninth hour; and at that same hour Jesus cried in a loud voice, saying,"—in those pitiful but sublime words—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which, being interpreted, mean—"My God, my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" Here was the bitterness, and the fear, and the dread of such a death. Christ was now forsaken! This is a most mysterious subject. Christ Jesus now stood at a great moral distance from God: in this sense He was forsaken. Two classes comprise all rational beings in the universe—the holy and the unholy. Between these two there is a great gulf; and especially between every individual of the latter class and the Eternal and Blessed Head of the first class. It was in this sense, amid the unholy, that Christ Jesus now stood. In His personal character, as the Son of God, He had no sin; but in His official character, as the Surety of lost man, He had sin; and, therefore, was removed to that moral distance from God to which sin removes all on whom it is found. And of this distance He had at this moment a most painful sense. The greatest offender who had ever existed on the earth was not, in the eye of the Divine Law, so great an offender as He now appeared. On Him there were now found more numerous and more aggravated sins than had ever been charged to the account of any single being. All the crimes of His people—already committed or yet to be committed—were now lying on Him, as if He had done them all. So did

the law of God now look upon Him ; and, oh, what pain must it have given Him, whose moral susceptibilities were so strong, arising from the perfect holiness of His person, to appear before the holy and omniscient eye of His Father in such a guise as this ! Holy prophets have often had a painful sense of the moral distance between them and God. When Isaiah saw His glory in the temple, he fell down on the ground and exclaimed, "Woe is me ! for I am undone, because I am an unclean man." "Oh, My God !" said Ezra, when confessing the sins of his people, "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, My God." But the holiness of Christ was greater than that of the prophets, and, therefore, the pain He now felt while standing before His Father, clothed with the sins of His people, was unspeakably greater than was ever endured from a similar cause by the holiest prophet.

Let us again remark, that the nature which endured all this suffering was just such a nature as ours, and drew its joy and sorrow from similar sources. Oh, what distress do we feel when we have exposed ourselves to suspicion in the eyes of a friend between whom and ourselves there has existed a mutual esteem and veneration. Every hour that passes while in this state is an hour of agony. Peace we can find none, until we have vindicated ourselves and wiped away every imaginable stain. Christ now stood before His Father covered with the guilt of innumerable thousands. What He endured at this hour can never be imagined. Sin not only divides God and the sinner ; its tendency is to break the links which bind the sinner to other creatures, and to place him alone in the universe. Christ Jesus was now *forsaken*. How often do we use that word without thinking of its awful meaning ! To be forsaken is to be lost. The soul of man was created to live in society, and, therefore, it was endowed with social powers. To draw a gulf around it, to place it so as that it can neither love nor be loved by other beings, to cause it to dwell *alone* in the desolate void of immensity, would be more awful than to annihilate its existence. No being on earth, Christ only excepted, was ever yet forsaken, in the full sense of that term. The guiltiest here have some who cleave to them, notwithstanding their guilt. Jesus looked around upon His creatures upon earth ; He looked along the ranks of His angels in heaven ; He looked up to the Divine Throne ; but every eye was averted,

every face was hid. He felt He was forsaken, and He now endured the same appalling sense of desolation which forms so large a portion of the misery of the lost. We do not mean He was forsaken of the Divine essence. In this sense no creature can be forsaken of God. God is necessarily present as to His essence with the sinner on earth, with the lost spirit in the pit of darkness, and with all beings, whether they dwell near His throne or not. Nor was the union between His two natures now dissolved; for in that case the human nature would have been annihilated under the load of wrath it was bearing. Nor do we affirm that the Son now ceased to be the object of the Father's love, for never had the patience and the obedience of the Son shone so brightly forth as in this hour. The earth was dark and the heavens shone not; but from the cross there came a moral effulgence which inundated both heaven and earth. The Father, therefore, did not cease to love the Son, but He ceased to manifest that love. The delightful communion He had hitherto enjoyed with God was now interrupted. The Divinity granted Him nothing but support. He now endured the punishment of the lost; the same punishment which forms so large a part of the misery of hell. To what Christ was now enduring in His soul, is also to be added the complete suspension of every public testimony to His Sonship. Adversity is the time when love is put upon her trial. This was the hour above every hour when Christ Jesus stood in need of the countenance of His Father; and yet this was the hour when He was forsaken. And never was any being more completely forsaken than the Son of God now was. All creatures in the universe from the throne downwards stood afar off. Not a voice spoke comfort—not an eye looked love. His countrymen—they had forsaken Him. His disciples—they too had fled. His own Father—Ah! that was the arrow that wounded Him to death! No wonder Satan raged, when the Father was silent. The roar of blasphemy rose to the heavens; but no voice came from the heavens to rebuke it. His enemies were now saying, "He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." This challenge remained without an answer, and those from whom it came counted this conclusive evidence that He was not the Son of God. To a spectator of the scene it must have appeared as if the throne of righteousness had fallen, while

CHURCH SERMONS.

wickedness had resolved to celebrate its fall by walking in triumph through the universe.

Dark as this scene was, yet how full of comfort it is to the Christian. That which was as the shadow of death, is turned into morning to the believer. Are we children of God and yet forsaken? Do we complain that our heavens are covered with a thick cloud, through which we cannot see the face nor hear the voice of our Father; that we cannot discern the work of grace in our souls, nor feel the real love of our Redeemer as we were wont? Do we complain that while in this state we have neither courage to hope, nor strength to labour, nor patience to suffer; that every duty is a burden to us, and that the prospect of death terrifies us? Do we say often—"Oh, that I were as in months past—as in the days when God preserved me, when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness?" This is a distressing, but far from being an unusual, case. Think we rather of the Cross and of what Christ endured upon it, for our individual selves. Never was the Son of God more completely forsaken. To find Him forsaken is surely far more surprising than to find ourselves so. He had never sinned, never unfitted Himself for Divine communion, never neglected the means of enjoying it. And let this encourage us to bear it—that God is dealing with us, as He deals with His sons and daughters, and as He dealt with His best of beloved sons.

The time, too, when we are forsaken, may greatly increase the infliction; to Christ Jesus this desertion was the more bitter, that it overtook Him on the Cross. We have just come, it may be, to some perilous part of our course; some valley overhung by frowning precipices, and set thick with gins and pitfalls; and it happens to us, as it has done to many a pilgrim before us, that, instead of having the light of the day to go through it, we are overtaken by the cloud of night; or we may have ascended some mount of communion expecting there to behold Him whom our soul loves, and lo! He is not there. But though God hides Himself from His people, He does not cease to be the God of His people. Christ Jesus, though forsaken, could still say, "My God." The relation between Him and His Father was not dissolved; neither can the covenant between ourselves and God ever be dissolved. In a little wrath He may hide His face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will He have mercy upon us. We

may be loved, though deserted—the Son of God was so. In one point His desertion differs from ours: His was penal; ours is not. Though deserted, we are not condemned. Are we in darkness then? Walk we by adoring faith! Trust we in the promise! Stay we ourselves on the God of Jacob! The Christian is most like a Christian—when he comes nearest the full dignity of his new nature—not when he is enjoying sensibly spiritual delights; but when he is living simply by faith. It is in the direct acting of his faith that his life lies. There is a spiritual grandeur about a life sustained by faith. It manifests the confidence which eminently glorifies him. “Though He slay me,” said the forsaken one of Uz, “yet will I trust in Him.” Blessed, omnipotent Faith! What enemy can’st thou not conquer? What darkness and gloom of the spirit can’st thou not dispel? They who have been led by Thee, have walked upon the floods, have sung amid the flames. Let the Christian, when deserted, think that there are those in heaven who have walked in darkness and had no light: yet they dwell now in everlasting day, and they now sing—“He brought us out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke our bonds in sunder.”

Yes, beloved brethren, in the things of this our mortal life and pilgrimage, what, I ask, will not faith and prayer do for us? We have only to think of that great event in December last, when the shadow of death was stretched over our royal Prince in his home at Sandringham—his body poised, as it were, between life and the dark valley of the shadow of death, for fifty-one hours—forsaken by intellect and the power of the brain. Then, in that vast suspense, came forth, thrilling with deep, fervent and holy emotion, the faith and prayers of thousands and tens of thousands of his people, scattered far and wide in God’s mighty creation, that he should live and breathe again. Then, indeed, came the victory of our faith, our prayer, our hope and our trust. His spirit revived within him, and he came forth out of the land of darkness into the teeming world of the living. Yes, brethren, as he stood before us, worshipping in St. Paul’s Cathedral, on the twenty-seventh day of the last month, then, indeed, we saw the wondrous mercy God had given unto him—“beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for his mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”—that he might glorify God the Jehovah, Elohim, and show forth His mighty work in the right

returning vigour of his noble young manhood, in his future pathway of life on earth, now so miraculously placed and presented before him, leading onwards with patience and perseverance in all the holy and sacred duties of his life towards a brighter and better land. His trial and affliction had been hallowed and sanctified by the holy prayers of his Queen-mother, his peerless wife, his loving sisters, brothers and relations, and the infant children of his love who could simper forth their innocent prayers for him,—their loved father—that God would spare him, and save him to them.

Lay we aside, therefore, all our pride and hardness, every towering imagination, every plea of merit and self-sufficiency which the self-love of man is apt to form. Let us ever remember that we—our sins and our iniquities—were the principal actors in this mournful tragedy. And, lifting up thine eyes to Calvary, where, bleeding on the Cross, expires the Saviour of the world, say, O Christian! has thy Redeemer not yet done enough to earn thy gratitude, and to ensure thy obedience?—that, Himself without sin, He should as a sinner suffer for thee? that by His stripes thou shouldest be healed, that by His being forsaken thou shouldest be received into favour? that, seeing the blood of this Paschal Lamb, the Destroying Angel should pass by thy door? Oh, the stupendous immensity of this love of Christ Jesus!—love, which the lips even of an Apostle were unable to describe!—love to fallen and sinful man, into which the very angels themselves may well desire to look! I cannot but conclude with the words of one so simple, holy and true, in the days of his pilgrimage on earth, as the late John Keble—

“ Lord of my heart, by Thy last cry,
 Let not Thy blood on earth be spent!
 Lo! at Thy feet I fainting lie;
 Mine eyes upon Thy wounds are bent;
 Upon thy streaming wounds my weary eyes
 Wait, like the parched earth on April skies.

Wash me, and dry my bitter tears!
 Oh, let my heart no further roam!
 This Thine by vows and hopes and fears
 Long since: Oh, call Thy wand’rer home!
 To that dear home, safe in Thy wounded side,
 Where only broken hearts from sin and shame may hide.”

A Sermon

BY

THE REV. J. W. GLEADALL, M.A.

PREACHED AT THE FOUNDLING CHAPEL, GUILDFORD
STREET, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, MORNING, APRIL 14, 1872.

"Beware of Covetousness."—Luke xii, 15.

Money is a great talent and a great power. It is a great blessing if obtained on right principles and devoted to right purposes ; but when sought on false principles and when consumed merely on self, on selfish and licentious gratification in the way of wanton extravagance and vain abundance, then it is that the curse of the Eternal rests upon it.

I have said that money is a great talent, and a great power—a possession of great value. Hardly necessary to make the observation you say, for all the world, by their actions, by their constant and eager pursuit of it, show that they are fully satisfied of its value and quite alive to it as an element of power. True, but the world not unfrequently pursues that which has no value—a phantom or a delusion, and very frequently pursues that which has a value for a wrong reason, or from a wrong motive. God has no quarrel with you for seeking something of value and of power ; God's quarrel with you is only when you seek it in a bad spirit and for a bad purpose. His controversy with you is not touching the gold, it is touching the principle, the mind and motive, the moving power with which you seek the gold. Let

this matter be set in its true light. You sometimes hear Scripture misrepresented about it—"Money is the root of all evil." It is not so, for this is a mistake and a misquotation. No natural gift of God is an evil, it becomes an evil only when we pervert it and misuse it. You sometimes hear it intimated by a class, happily small it must be confessed, that the pursuit of money implies of necessity contractedness, littleness of thought, meanness of spirit. Prose has exhausted its epithets, poetry its figures, argument its logic, and rhetoric its tropes, in pouring contempt upon the pursuit; a pursuit in which those who are prompt to sneer at it, are very often ready enough to engage. But how, in reality, does the Bible speak of this matter? It places wealth precisely on the same footing with every other description of temporal good; to be regarded in the same manner, estimated for the same reasons, sought in the same spirit, and used for the same end. Its very first mention of gold is in connection with the Garden of Eden, and its last with the new Jerusalem—the Heavenly City. It compares the tried and purified Christian to gold from the furnace; it informs us that God gave gold to Solomon as a mark of His favour; it describes the Son of Man when appearing in His glory as having on His head a golden crown. Its doctrine is this, that property, like health, intellect, knowledge, rank and station, is a talent and a power entrusted to man by God, to be used in relation to His will and in obedience to His law, ever bearing in mind that an account of it will be demanded at the Day of Judgment. It is like food which, properly taken, contributes to health, improperly or excessively taken, brings on disease and accelerates death. It is like water which kept outside the ship floats her on to the anticipated haven, but which if allowed to enter and fill the ship becomes her destruction. Held with a right spirit and used to right purposes, it is like the air when moving in the pure breeze of heaven—a minister of comfort, enjoyment, health and life; held with a wrong spirit and used for wrong purposes, it is like the same air when tainted with pestilence or swept with the tornado—the medium of mischief and of death. It is not money but the love of money—the ceaseless, all-absorbing desire for money—which is the root of all evil; that attachment to money which sacrifices every thing to its acquisition, which in its determined pursuit, overleaps all moral consideration and religious principle; which will have money at all risks and all hazards—it is this that Scripture calls idolatry, for this is making money our master

when it ought to be our servant. This is idolizing it instead of using it. The patriarch does not say, "If I have possessed gold," but, "If I have made gold my hope; or said to fine gold thou art my confidence, this would be iniquity." When our Lord says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven," he immediately explains himself—"How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Properly used money is a great good; wrongly used a most pernicious evil. In the one case, according to the saying of an old writer, "It is a loadstone to draw men nearer to God; in the other a millstone to sink them into perdition." Gold in the hand is well, if it do not get into the heart; though, alas! it often gets into the heart when there is little enough of it in the hand. The great distinction our Lord makes is this: on the one hand laying up treasure for earth, that is in a selfish spirit and for selfish aims; and on the other being rich towards God, that is holding our possession as His stewards, and devoting them to purposes which He permits, approves and sanctions. Our rich friend in the parable, which was read during the service this morning, and which is used to illustrate the text, was not called a fool because his lands were vast and fertile, and because by his skilful and diligent cultivation of them they brought him a rich and abundant harvest; he was not called a fool because he pulled down his old barns and built them up again stronger and more pretentious;—it would have been a sin and an insult to the bounty of providence if he had not secured the fruits of God's earth both from destruction by the weather, and from depredation by the midnight robber;—he was not branded as a fool for this. This was being active, and diligent, and showed prudent forethought; but when he cast an eye over all this mass of plenty, this overflowing store with which a good and beneficent God had blessed his labours and crowned his fields, he took no thought of the bountiful Giver. His ideas ranged no higher than his own pleasure, his own aggrandizement. He looked at all this increasing abundance and calculated only how it could best administer to his own selfish and sensual gratification. For this he was denominated a fool; in this lay his sin. And yet to how many important objects might that wealth have been applied. Wealth! It is the channel of diversified blessings, the minister of natural wants, the handmaid of comfort, knowledge, and intelligence, an agent of power for doing good and spreading happiness; sustaining the

CHURCH SERMONS.

cause of benevolence and sending the gospel to the ends of the earth. The text does not say, "Beware of gold ; beware of searching for gold ;" but "beware of covetousness," and the spirit and essence of covetousness lie in the selfish love, the selfish possession, and the selfish use and enjoyment of the gold—laying up treasure for self, not being rich towards God.

You will observe again, that the Bible everywhere inculcates the virtues that tend to prosperity, and denounces the vices that lead to poverty. Do not mistake me. The Bible inculcates moral excellence, and denounces moral delinquency on infinitely higher grounds, and for vaster and nobler reasons than mere temporal advantage.

Religion insists upon all christian graces and moral virtues, not because they procure temporal wealth, but because they constitute the Divine Image in the soul of man ; because in their existence man realizes the greatness of his own nature, and by their exercise works for the glory of God, the welfare of mankind, and his own preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven. But it is, nevertheless, true that Godliness has the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come ; because it enjoins the practice of that prudence, forethought, self-restraint and self-denial, which are essential to success. It insists upon, and all its principles lead to that industry, rectitude and good faith, that attention to business and not to pleasure, that discreet good sense which knows where to stop as well as where to begin, all of which are elements of success and tend to prosperity. Even then, in a worldly sense it is true, that in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

Now, from what has been said, and without the necessity of saying anything more on the subject, the difference seems clear enough between the proper pursuit of this world's good, and what the text denounces as covetousness. Viewed abstractedly, there is nothing wrong in the pursuit. It is right, it is reasonable. God has given you powers of activity ; he has enjoined diligence ; he has said "The hand of the diligent maketh rich ;" he has, therefore, no controversy with you as to the pursuit ; it is with reference to the principle and motive of the pursuit, that he says : "Beware of covetousness." Of all degrading tendencies, covetousness is the strongest, and of all vices it is the meanest ; more than all others it deteriorates the character, it injures and debases the whole soul ; it blasts every generous, manly,

frank and kindly feeling ; it is the root of all evil, and it is the object of some of the fiercest denunciations in the Word of God. It violates the entire moral law, for it is the love of self, at the expense both of God and man. It cast down Balaam from the position of the prophet ; it was the destruction of Ananias and Sapphira ; it sent Judas from the Apostleship to perdition. Multitude its causes to be troubled about many things, so that they neglect the one thing that is good. Multitudes it sends away sorrowful from Jesus, because they will not give up the world for Him. Beware of it ! Bear in mind, that you are God's stewards, and that on all you have He has written this inscription, "occupy for me until I shall come." Forget not that above all things ; and if, in spite of truth and principles, you will be rich, you will pierce yourself through with many sorrows. Some eighteen centuries back a question was asked of very great significance, the weight and import of which familiarity has not weakened, and the lapse of time has not diminished—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?" If the universe were ours, it could not, as we pass into eternity, blot out one single sin or purchase one single smile of favour, or offer any bribe whatever to the Judge upon the throne. On the contrary, if misemployed it would be the very ground of our condemnation. Therefore, think not too much of wealth. In the words of the wise Lord Bacon, "seek not proud riches, but such as thou canst win justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly." Think not too much of wealth. Seek it, if you will, as God's Providence may permit, in the exercise of the diligence he enjoins and for the ends His word proposes ; but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. I remember meeting somewhere with an anecdote with which I will conclude. A stranger once met a young man with whose appearance and intelligence he was much pleased, and after some conversation together the stranger asked him about his plans for the future, about his views in life. "I am now," said the young man, "employed in a merchant's house, and my expectation is to succeed and get into business for myself." "What then ?" said the stranger. "Why, then I hope to prosper and set up an establishment of my own." "And what next ?" "To retire from business and enjoy the fruits of my labour and my industry." "And what next ?" "Why," said the young man thoughtfully, "it is the lot of all to die, and I cannot escape." "And what

CHURCH SERMONS.

next?" he was once more asked by the stranger—"What next?" To that question the young man had no answer. He had laid his plans for time—wisely and prudently laid his plans for time—but he had not taken eternity into his calculation. Brethren, see to it that there be not written as your epitaph "Gained his money, and lost his soul."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 22.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR PLUMPTRE, M.A.,

Prebendary of St. Paul's, and Rector of Pluckley, Kent.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1872.

"The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before His shearers, so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away; and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth."—Acts viii, 32-33.

We cannot wonder that the devout pilgrim, who had come from the Upper Nile to worship in Jerusalem, and was now on his homeward way, should have found these words, and the whole prophecy of which they form a part, hard to understand. He had read it, thought over it, seen its difficulties, as the words passed from his lips; and the question rose before his mind "Of whom speaks the prophet thus? of himself or of some other man?" Who is this mysterious servant of the Lord of whom such strange things are spoken, who seems to unite in himself attributes so strangely contrasted? Now he appears as the elect of God; on him rests the Spirit of the Lord, opening the eyes of the blind, and bringing those that sit in darkness out of the prisonhouse; now he himself is spoken of as "blind and deaf," seeing many things and not observing any, as though the dullness and hardness of the nation were all gathered up in him as

its representative ; now he is identified with Jacob and Israel, as needing and receiving forgiveness, and yet blessed with the fulness of the Spirit ; now, as in the opening of the very prophecy which the Ethiopian read, he is "exalted and extolled, and is made very high." And then there comes a startling and abrupt change. A strange dirge-like strain comes across that jubilant sound of triumph, and we read of one whose "visage was marred more than any man ;" "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," meeting suffering, and shame, and death with uncomplaining patience, wounded for transgressions, and bruised for iniquities that were not His own, and so accepted as an offering for sin—at once the Sacrifice, and the Priest, making intercession for the transgressors whose guilt He had taken on Himself.

It is not difficult, perhaps, to imagine the line of interpretation which removed those difficulties and led the enquirer who found the guidance which he had been seeking, to believe and be baptized. "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus." We can almost hear the words in which he would tell what to the listener was the new story of the life of the Son of Man ; His works of power and love, the wisdom and the grace that marked His speech, His silence and patience when other men would have been stirred to wrath ; the sacrificial import of His death as a ransom for man, and an atonement for the world. Other incidents may have gathered round this main line of fulfilment. His works of healing may have been thought of as wrought, not by the exercise of limitless power, but through the sympathy with which He identified Himself with all human suffering, and so "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." The incidents of His passion, the companionship with robbers in the death on Calvary, the newly-hewn tomb in the garden of the rich man, may have been dwelt on then, as they have been since, as fulfilling words that otherwise seemed never to have found, and never to be likely to find, a fulfilment in the history of the world. So it was that the darkness was lighted up with the light of heaven, and out of that tale of sorrow came a new peace and gladness ; and the pilgrim, now assured of pardon and redemption through the Sufferer of whom he had been reading, went on his way rejoicing.

To him that interpretation seemed altogether adequate. It

has been enough for devout souls in all ages of the Church. It has been the strongest argument against unbelief and Judaism, that this witness to the suffering Christ—"Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block"—should remain in its integrity in their own books. Men who have accepted the fact, and called themselves by the name of Him who suffered, have found in this passage the key to its purpose and its effect. Here if anywhere, they have felt, and felt truly, are the outlines of the true doctrine of the Atonement.

But the questions which present themselves to men's minds vary as the centuries pass on; and the answers have to be modified accordingly. They have asked not only for an interpretation which should explain a few words taken by themselves, but for one which should show their coherence with what goes before and after. Over and above all questions as to authorship and date, on which I will not enter, they seek to trace the sequence of a prophet's thoughts, the birth and growth for example, of this great idea of the servant of the Lord, as well as to find out the meaning of words which are received as, authoritative and inspired. The questionings to which that demand, has in many instances, given rise may seem to have led the enquirers very wide of the truth. They have read the later and the earlier prophecies which bear Isaiah's name, and have not found Christ in either. They have identified that servant of the Lord with Israel as a people, now in the ideal glory of its calling, now in the actual debasement of its sin. The priestly nation of mankind, they had also the terrible prerogative of suffering more than others. Or they have pointed to the prophets as an order, or to some great representative of the order, such as Jeremiah, as being the central figure in that drama of passion and death which the words of Isaiah bring before us. I do not accept, and I cannot bring myself on such a day as this, to discuss, these conflicting theories; but the feeling out of which they rise is, as we are bound in the name of truth itself to admit, a natural and a right one, and has a legitimate claim to satisfaction. We do well to seek to enter into the manifold wisdom of God in all its fulness, and not to rest content with fragmentary interpretations. Here also, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, we may press on to perfection. Completeness in our knowledge of Scripture is set before all teachers and readers as a thing to be desired and aimed at.

(1.) We ask then, in what way and by what steps was the prophet led to that thought, seemingly so much at variance with the hope with which he had started, that the servant of the Lord should die the death of a malefactor, and only through that death be the Deliverer and Saviour of His people. And the answer is I believe not far to seek. Every hope of the glorious future which the prophets of Israel cherished, had been connected in the first instance with some human representative, or had grown out of some personal experience. Because they had seen in Moses a prophet of God, with whom the Lord spoke, not only in dreams and dark sayings, but face to face, they looked forward to a prophet like him, to a greater than he, who should come into the world to reveal the will of his Father. Because they had seen in David, one in whom, with all his many faults, they could yet recognize the image of a righteous King, they were led to think that one day the ideal would be realised; and that the King would reign in righteousness and execute judgment and justice on the earth. Because the High Priest, as he offered the sacrifice and burnt incense in the Temple, brought out thoughts of sympathy and intercession which seemed to belong to the kingly office, and yet were actually separated from it, they were also led to look forward to a time when the two functions should be united, each in its truest and noblest form, and there should be a "priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek." May we not believe there was something analogous to this in the birth and expansion of the thought, with which we here come in contact, of the Great Sufferer, the Great Martyr, the Great Sacrifice of the future? Had not Isaiah in the later years of his life passed through an experience which was certain to be fruitful in new thoughts, and to throw those which had before been prominent into the shade? There had been a time in which, having in Hezekiah a new David, as it were, before him, he had dwelt chiefly or wholly on the expectation of a righteous King, with a half-cherished hope that his people had not long to wait for the reality. Such had been his thoughts when he spoke of the Virgin's Son, whose name should be called Emmanuel, who was the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Rod that should come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch that should grow out of his root. Now that hope had faded. The storm of a fierce persecution burst upon the faithful and the pure. The

righteous perished, and no man laid it to heart. The prophet himself, and those who looked to him as their guide and teacher, were in very deed despised and rejected of men, led as sheep to the slaughter, numbered among the transgressors. And yet he felt, (it must have been with him, as with other like sufferers, his one consolation,) that in and through them was the only hope for his people. It was true of the earlier as of the later faith, that the blood of martyrs was the seed of the Church. Those who were wounded for the transgressions and bruised for the iniquities of others, would yet see their seed, see also of the travail of their soul, and be satisfied. Would not such an experience project itself into his anticipations of the future? If the Servant of the Lord represented all that he could hope of the highest embodiment of the life of his people, could he fail to grasp the thought that there also must be a victory won by suffering, that the great law of sacrifice would assert itself and claim a fulfilment there? A higher wisdom than his own was teaching him that even the Christ whom he expected was not to enter into joy until first He had suffered pain; that the highest holiness must be found in the most entire identification of the sufferer, by his own free choice, with the infirmities, transgressions and chastisements of those whom He came to save. So it was that He became, even more than in his brightest, and most jubilant visions, the Prophet of the Gospel. The strain which opened with the glad tidings of great joy. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God," found not its contradiction, but its consummation, in the words which pointed to the mystery of the Passion: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed."

(2.) And as we are thus able to trace in some measure, the discipline by which the prophet was led to this discernment of a truth before but dimly seen, we may venture, I believe, to go one step further, and say not only that the prophecy was fulfilled in Him whom we own as Lord, but that it tended in the nature of things—that is, by God's appointment—to work out its own fulfilment. All thoughts of ours are feeble, all words of ours should be wary and few, as we contemplate the mystery of those thirty years of silent expectancy, during which the Son of Man was waiting till His hour should come. We know that they were years of loving obedience and stainless purity, of growth in wisdom and ripening thoughts, of an ever deepening sympathy

with men as brothers, and entire self-sacrifice to His Father's will. If we would bring ourselves to contemplate that Life in its purely human aspect, if the *Ecce Homo* might lead us on now, as it has often done, to the recognition of the *Ecce Deus*, we must think of the words of Law, and Psalm, and Prophet, as having been to His soul the channels through which He learnt to know the greatness of His calling and to take an estimate of the work which had been given Him to do. What was that tarrying in the Temple, that "hearing and asking questions," but the unfolding in its true order—natural as being orderly and harmonious, yet supernatural as being free from any element of rebellion, or distrust—of that intellectual life which in us is so often marred by doubt and unbelief, or defiled by sins of sense, or crushed by the lower cares which the work of the world brings with it? Must we not recognize in such a phase of growth in the perfect manhood—as in any approximation to it in those who are imperfect—a token of the life which fed upon the Word of God and took it as a light unto His feet, and a lantern to His path? Does it not add to our sense of the greatness and beauty of the Divine element of these olden Scriptures, to believe that they were thus instrumental in leading that life to all its completeness? This, at least, we know that when He entered upon His ministry it was as one whose whole soul was permeated with their teaching; in whose memory their words were stored as the ground-work of all He did and taught. So it was that in His first conflict with the power of evil His weapons of warfare were the simple primary truths which formed the basis of the education of every Jewish child. So it was, when He taught "as one having authority," men asked with wonder; "How knoweth this man letters—the sacred books of our fathers—having never learnt?" The ever-recurring words with which He confutes the formalism and hypocrisy of the scribes are—"Have ye never read? Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." His first proclamation of His kingdom was based upon one of Isaiah's prophecies; and we may well believe that it was part of the discipline by which He learnt obedience through the things which He suffered, that He recognized and accepted the thought of the suffering which this vision of the prophet's brought before Him? A false Christ would have dwelt, as false Christs did afterwards, on the promises of glory, victory, dominion. He to whom the Spirit

was given not by measure, knew that a far other path was that which He was called to tread, and He prepared Himself, from the first, for the shame and agony of the Cross. It was no strange thing to Him that a prophet should be without honour in his own country, and in his father's house. He could not let His disciples confess Him as Christ, the Son of God, without then for the first time warning them that the Son of Man must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and must be despised and rejected of men, that He had come not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. Even in those words in which He at once hinted at, and veiled the manner of His death—"so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me;" "the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified," we may hear the very echoes of the words in which Isaiah had spoken of the Servant of the Lord, as "exalted and extolled," were lifted up and glorified, and yet as One at whom many were astonished, and whose visage was marred more than any man's and His form than the sons of men. So it was that, as on this day—Palm Sunday—for the first and last time, He entered the Holy City as its King. There was a strange contrast between the central form in that procession, and the crowds who had come up with Him from Galilee, or gone out from Jerusalem to meet Him. They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear; were dreaming of high places on the right hand and on the left; were clamorous, exulting, jubilant. The garments strewn along the way, the palm branches in their hands, all spoke of the triumph in which they thought they were to bear their part; but He, around whom all this tumult surges, moves on silent, sorrowful and weary. He submits, almost with the acquiescence of a sad irony, to what they impose on Him. He directs the manner of His entry—not a war chariot of triumph, but an ass's colt—so that it shall be a protest, though they did not then see it, against the dreams which they were cherishing. When the advancing procession gains the heights of the mount of Olives, the tears gather in His eyes; and, looking on the city, He weeps over it, as seeing the sentence of condemnation already written against it, in judgment for the blindness which had not known, at least in that her day, the things that belonged to her peace. He knew that those Hosannas would soon fade away, and instead of them

there would be the fierce, relentless yells of men who thirsted for blood. Shame and not glory, failure and not success; agony, treachery, abandonment, the dark hour of utter loneliness, the blackness of darkness, and the valley of the shadow of Death,—this was the cup which the Father had given Him to drink, and to this He was passing on, half tremulous and half calm, through that rejoicing and exulting multitude. Yes, that death was the goal to which He had all along looked forward. Only through it could He accomplish that which He had come into the world to do; only through that could He work out the great ideal of the Christ which had been portrayed in Isaiah's prophecy. It was precisely because that death was more than a martyrdom—in the fullest sense of the words, sacrificial, mediatorial, representative—that it was also the highest of all martyrdoms. To that end was He born, and for this purpose He came into the world, to bear witness to the truth; and the truth was none other than the everlasting love of the Father, revealing itself in the suffering and the obedience of the Son. So it was that the servant of the Lord was seen to be one with the Word made flesh. He who was in the form of God, had not counted equality with God, though that had been His through eternal ages, as a possession to be held fast, or seized, as men seize their prey; but had emptied Himself of that glory which He had before the world was, and had taken upon Himself the form of a servant and had become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. So in the words of Isaiah, that servant was "exalted and extolled, and made very high;" or in those of St. Paul which at once complete and interpret Isaiah's, "God also hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, or things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Thus then we are brought round, though it may be by a different path, to the old result. When we hear the question to which men have given such discordant answers; "Of whom speaketh the prophet thus?" we may still return answer to the questioner; that He in whom the prophet's words find their fulfilment, is none other than the Lord Jesus. Whatever partial fulfilment there may have been (and it lies in the nature of the

prophecy, that there may have been not a few who were unconscious of their greatness, and in whom it yet found its springing and germinant accomplishments); here we have the complete, conscious, deliberate acceptance of the work of which the prophet spoke—the full reality at once of the suffering and of the blessedness. That thought, if I mistake not, gives a new and more pregnant fulness in Isaiah's words, and leads us to deeper and more solemn thoughts as to the sufferings and death of which they speak. In some mysterious way we are identified with those sufferings as having caused them, and as reaping peace and eternal life from them. If we are reading of one who was more than a martyr to a cause, or the patriot leader of a people's forlorn hope, if we see in the Son of Man, the Saviour of mankind, we must accept the truth; "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and that with His stripes we are healed."

We stand, my brethren, on the threshold of the week which brings that suffering before us in all its awfulness. We are called to gaze on that pale worn face with all its infinite depths of suffering and tenderness; to watch the suffering to which the world in all its history has nothing like in kind or in degree; to hear the communings of the Master, Brother, and Friend, with the disciples who could not understand Him, and some of whom betrayed, denied, forsook Him. The sorrow, as of one, on whom the fear of death had fallen, whom a horrible dread had overwhelmed; the shrinking back, if it were possible, from the cup which yet, in obedience to His Father's will, He was ready to drink to the very dregs: the pity, deep and full, which shewed itself, when He prayed for those who nailed Him to the Cross, and welcomed the first gleams of penitence in the robber who reviled Him—all this is brought before us. May we not fear, as we think of the actual life of England during the week which begins to-day, that the words of the Prophet of Israel are painfully and terribly true of our Church and Nation—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed." It is not only that the trade and business of life go on. That must needs be, and all true work done as in the fear of God is compatible with the reverence and self-recollection which such a season calls for. To labour in such cases is to pray; but

what we note as a strange, startling symptom of the dying out of faith and reverence—yes, even of the tenderness of human pity—from the hearts of the great masses of our large cities, is that the day on which the depths of that Divine Sorrow are solemnly brought before them—a day which should bring at least a universal hush of awe and reverence, is to thousands and tens of thousands a day of feasting and sensual mirth; a holiday of revelling and riot; a day of excursions and shows. Men “hide, as it were, their faces from Him”—“He is despised and they esteem Him not.” The Romanist whom we condemn for his devotion to the Crucifix, might well ask in sorrow or in scorn, “Is this the honour which Protestants render to the Crucified?” The Mahommedan, who sojourns among us, might well ask whether Christians thus reverence their Prophet? Our thoughts of those who thus err need not be harsh or bitter; if they were, we should be sinning more than they against the love which was manifested on the Cross. We cannot doubt that the prayer and intercession which go up from Him, for those who, as it were, crucify Him afresh and put Him to open shame, now, as it was of old, is “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But the evil is a great and a growing one; and you, my friends and brethren, as Christian men and women, are bound to hold aloof from it, and to protest by influence and example, by speech or by silence, against it; bound yet more to let the death of the Cross, the love of the Crucified, be seen in your lives and thoughts, your temper and desires. So, by the knowledge which has Him for its centre and its object, shall the righteous Servant of the Lord justify many; so, in proportion as the souls of men are drawn to the Father, and translated out of the darkness into His marvellous light, will He “see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied” therewith.



A S e r m o n

BY THE

REV. GORDON CALTHROP, M.A.,

Vicar of St. Augustine's Church, Highbury.

PREACHED AT ST. AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH, Highbury,
LONDON,

ON GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 1872.

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening."—Exodus xii, 5, 6.

In these words, we have part of the directions given to the people of Israel, about the sacrifice of the Passover.

The animal, selected for the sacrifice, was to be absolutely immaculate. No blemish, or imperfection of any kind, was to be found in it. It was, moreover, to be in the prime of its age, and in the fulness of its vigour—"a male of the first year." And in order to cut off all occasion of mistake, or error, in these points, it was to be set apart and kept under observation, watched and scrutinized, for a certain length of time; "from the tenth day unto the fourteenth." By this precaution it was supposed that all danger would be obviated, of offering up to Jehovah, the All-searching, All-knowing God, a "corrupt thing;" that which had upon it the taint of impurity, or the fault of an incompleted bodily organization. Then, when the period of observation and scrutiny had been fulfilled, "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel were to kill it in the evening."

In these words too, we have a reference, by anticipation, to the great, the true Sacrifice, which we commemorate to-day. All the circumstances, it is to be presumed, connected with the offering up of the Paschal Lamb are typical. "Christ our

Passover," says St. Paul, "is sacrificed for us." And we are justified in believing that the injunction here given, to "keep up" the Lamb, received its fulfilment in some part of the history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "the Lamb without blemish and without spot." I propose then, to ask you to consider with me this morning, the prophetic meaning of the text; and what particular facts it may be supposed to refer to in the person and work of our blessed Lord.

In the first place then, we seem to have an intimation, in the verse, of the perfect *humanity* of our Lord Jesus Christ. Various strange theories, as you probably know, have been started on this subject. Some persons have asserted the body of Jesus Christ to be a phantom. They have said that it was only in appearance, not in reality, that He ate and drank, slept, suffered, lived and died. Others again have supposed that the Deity in Him supplied the place of the human soul. But these and similar theories, are overthrown by the statement of our text. It teaches us that in Jesus Christ was to be found, in absolute perfection, all that constitutes human nature. Body, soul, spirit, He had these distinct from the Godhead, though in an inseparable union and alliance with the Godhead. And thus Jesus Christ was emphatically, the "Son of Man," the representative, and embodiment, and impersonation of human nature, as it came forth from the hands of God in its purity and perfection. Yet again, the passage seems to imply that the sacrifice would be offered at a time when the victim was in the fulness of his age and powers; having attained to maturity, but not showing any sign, or carrying any trace of failure or decay. And certainly this intimation was fulfilled in the case of the sacrifice offered up upon Calvary. What would have been the result had Christ been crucified in early youth, or when He was advancing towards the weakened energies and failing powers of old age, we do not know; nor is it of any importance for us to know. But this we are assured of, that, when the victim was offered up, it was humanity in the full development of all its bodily and spiritual powers, that was laid upon that awful altar.

But I pass away from this part of our subject. I am more anxious for you to notice what is intended by the second statement of the text, in which we are told that the Paschal Lamb, after selection, was to be "kept up" (by which expression we are to understand, kept under observation) from the tenth to the

fourteenth day. Now it is a curious fact, and a significant one, that our Lord, on the evening of the day on which He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, went into the Temple at the very time when the Temple officials, having selected the Passover lamb, were putting it into the usual place, where it would be watched and observed. They were just beginning to "keep it up." This evening—for the Jews reckoned from sunset to sunset—would be the beginning of the tenth day. And on the fourteenth day—the day corresponding to that on which we are now assembled together—Jesus was crucified; the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel uniting together to put Him to death. During the intervening period, God so ordered it, that Christ should stand in the full blaze of a most searching scrutiny; that He should be watched, and examined, and tried, and tested to the uttermost. He issued from the ordeal most triumphantly, of course. No blemish was found upon Him, though many tried to find it. He was the pure spotless Lamb; declared to be so, not by the words of interested friends, but by the admission of impartial spectators, or by the confessions, wrung with difficulty, from the lips of malignant foes. Let me ask you just to consider this matter with me.

For two or three days, Christ is in the Temple, delivering His final discourses. Here He is most narrowly watched. He is surrounded by hosts of eager questioners, interested in catching Him in His words. The Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, representatives from all the schools of thought in Judea, assail Him in succession, with subtle arguments; but each retires discomfited, foiled and silenced, by the wise and gracious words that proceed out of His mouth. Now had Christ been anything else but what He professed to be, His false pretensions must surely have been detected, in the midst of so fiery a trial as this. Consider. The intellect, the acumen of the country, edged by an intensifying dislike, and a keen desire to expose His asserted imposture, is arrayed against Him. Had He been an ambitious worldly man; had He really entertained those projects of personal aggrandizement, which His enemies attributed to Him—He must surely have been unveiled. But, although his sharpwitted opponents, trained in all the subtleties of the Jewish Theological Schools, assail Him again and again, they can produce no impression whatever upon His impregnable position. They are dashed back, as waves are dashed back in

the spray of impotent fury from the massive rocks of some iron-bound coast; and at last they give up the attempt in despair. "From that time forth, durst no man ask Him any more questions." So ends the first stage of the scrutiny to which the Saviour is exposed.

Next we find Him in the grasp of His enemies; brought up before the assembled Sanhedrim. Here again, He is narrowly scrutinized. How does He come out of the ordeal? His judges are the most powerful persons in the State. They have unlimited supplies of money at their command; and, if it is possible to obtain false witnesses for their purpose, they are sure to be able to obtain them. Their victim, too, has led a public life. He has taught openly in the Synagogue and in the Temple; and in secret, has He said nothing. And, if there is any statement, or assertion of His, which is in opposition to the Jewish Law, there will be no difficulty whatever, about bringing it to light. And yet after all the searching of the Sanhedrim, and all their power over the consciences of men, and all their unlimited supply of the means of bribing, they can only, with much difficulty, as it appears, find two false witnesses. And these men, hired perjurers as they are, can only speak about a certain enigmatical expression of the Saviour, with respect to the rebuilding of the Temple, by which He alluded to the resurrection of His body. And even then their witnesses do not agree together. Where are the old charges about Sabbath breaking? Many persons must have been witnesses of miracles, wrought by Christ on the Sabbath day. Where are the old assertions that Christ wrought His wonders by collusion with Beelzebub—the chief of the devils? Are His persecutors ashamed of these charges? It seems so. It seems as if the fact, that Jesus wrought His miracles by the power of God, had become so apparent, that His enemies did not dare even to revive the accusations with which they had assailed Him at an earlier period of His ministry. At all events, they felt that such a course of procedure, was not one to be adopted by the Sanhedrim. And so, at last, baffled, disappointed, almost despairing, they are driven to the illegal, un-Jewish measure, of condemning the prisoner; not upon the evidence brought against Him, but by the confession of His own mouth. In the midst of an awful silence, the High Priest rises solemnly up, and addresses Jesus—"I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ; the Son of the

CHURCH SERMONS.

Blessed ; the Son of God." And when Jesus thus adjured answered, "I am," the whole assembly, with an outburst of execration against the blasphemy, with one unanimous vote, condemns Him to death. *This* is all the fault His enemies can find in Him,—that He asserts Himself to be what He really is ; and on this ground they condemn Him.

Proofs of His innocence multiply fast. He is sent to Herod. The scoffer, with his men of war, mocks the lowly Nazarene, as a misguided enthusiast ; ridicules His pretension, reviles His person ; but sends Him back to the Roman governor, with the message that he can find no fault in Him. Pontius Pilate, convinced of His innocence, strives hard to get Him free from the malice of His enemies. His conscience is painfully at variance with his interest. He knows what is right ; but he has not the courage to do it. He sees through the whole affair. He reads the heart ; he understands the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees ; but he cannot extricate himself from the toils which their malice, and his own past life, have bound round him. And so, with a pitiable attempt to remove from himself the blame of an act for which his conscience condemns him, he takes water and washes his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it." But before this, another and a most singular testimony to the spotlessness of Jesus, had been delivered. Pilate's wife forwards to her husband, a sort of message from the unseen world. Just as he is set down on the judgment-seat, she sent unto him saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." We pass on further ; we hear the penitent malefactor rebuking his comrade : "We receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done nothing amiss." And, presently, when the last sigh has been drawn ; and Jesus has breathed out His soul into the Father's hands, the Centurion, standing by, as if actuated by an irresistible impulse, cries out, "Certainly this was a righteous man." But, perhaps, the most remarkable testimony of all, is that borne by Judas Iscariot. As a disciple, as one of the twelve, living in most intimate communion with his Divine Master, the traitor must have had every opportunity of scrutinizing the character, and watching the conduct of Jesus Christ. He watched Him too, with the keen eyes of a growing and intensifying dislike. If there had been the slightest

inconsistency in Jesus, Judas must have known it. Had Jesus sought His own aggrandizement, harboured ambitious designs, Judas must have known it. And when the agony of remorse came upon the traitor, and he felt, in inexpressible bitterness and anguish of spirit, what he had done, when it could not be undone, he would have given worlds to have been able to fasten upon some flaw, some speck, some stain in the life of Jesus, by which he could justify to himself the villainous deed which he had committed against the Saviour. But he could find none. There was absolutely no blemish in that perfect life. And, maddened by the thought of the purity, and gentleness, and love, against which he had sinned, he rushes into the Temple, flings down the money, howling out, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood ;" and hurries out to seek a refuge, as he thinks, from his remorse, in the commission of suicide.

Here then, Christian brethren, we have a combined and emphatic testimony. The judges, the witnesses, Herod the king, Pilate the governor, Pilate's wife, the penitent malefactor, the centurion, the false disciple, Judas ; all either indifferent, or hostile witnesses—bear testimony to the fact of the Saviour's innocence. They show us that the Lamb of God was perfect, spotless, immaculate. When kept under observation, watchful, keen, hostile observation, no fault whatever could be found in Him. Such a sacrifice we know was needed ; for such a sacrifice alone could be accepted by God. And God took care that the spotlessness of the Great Victim should be manifested to the world. Let us be thankful for this manifestation. Christian brethren, on this day, on which we commemorate that mysterious Sacrifice, once, and once for all, offered on Calvary, let us be thankful to remember that it is not by common things—by corruptible things—that we have been redeemed from the power and the curse of sin, but by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb *without blemish and without spot.*"



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 23.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

TRUTH & LOVE, OR CHRISTIAN
CONTROVERSY.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

PREACHED AT EATON CHAPEL, EATON SQUARE,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1872.

"Speaking the truth in Love."—Ephesians iv, 15.

The word translated "speaking the truth" is a more comprehensive one, than appears from our rendering. It means being true and dealing truly, whether in thought, word or deed; and therefore, in its combination with "love," forms a suitable text for the subject of our consideration this morning; namely, the way in which we ought to feel and act towards good men whom we believe to be in serious error; men who manifestly have the Spirit of God and the love of Christ in their hearts, but yet depart, perhaps widely and deeply, from what seems to us the plain and positive teaching of Holy Scripture. How are we to reconcile the apparently, though never really, conflicting claims of Truth and Love?

No one, who desires to please God in all things, and who sees the endless diversities of belief that are to be found even amongst the best Christians, can fail to appreciate the

anxious importance of this practical question. If we merely want to save ourselves from trouble, or from charges of inconsistency ; if we merely desire to win the applause of a party, nothing is easier than to choose one side or the other, and stand to it through thick and thin. We shall then always know exactly what to do without the trouble of thinking ; we shall always be on the crest of the wave with our own party, and we can easily shut our eyes and ears to the abuse of the other party. We shall know what newspapers or magazines to read, and what not to read, if we want to be quite happy and perfectly satisfied that we are thoroughly in the right.

On the one hand, it is very easy to be an extreme latitudinarian ; to say that, with such differences of opinion, it is impossible to know which is right and which is wrong : your opponent is as likely to be right as you are ; at all events, when such good men are found holding a certain opinion, there cannot possibly be much harm in it ; and no one should be blamed for what he believes or what he disbelieves.

It is equally easy to go to the opposite extreme ; to call every opinion that differs from your own "vital error," and to denounce those who maintain it, as if they were enemies of the Cross of Christ ; to speak publicly and privately of *them*, as well as of their *views*, in such a way as renders the interchange even of ordinary civilities between you, well nigh impossible ; and all this even when you know, or ought to know, that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and devoting their entire energies, according to their light, to spread Christ's kingdom on the earth. I say this is as easy as the other, and will bring as much applause from those whose consciences are *on this matter* seared as with a hot iron by party spirit.

But when anyone's conscience becomes thoroughly awakened on the subject, he soon sees what danger there is on the right hand and on the left,—of sinning either against God's truth or against God's children ; he sees that there is no "safe side," and that if he wants to secure his Master's approval, he must not be content to shut his eyes and follow the multitude either in one course or in the other.

We shall not attempt to consider any particular case ; which would be impossible without a full knowledge of all the circum-

stances bearing upon it. In the last resort, every one must judge for himself, in dependence on the light of God's Holy Spirit sought by earnest prayer. But it may be useful to suggest some of the leading principles, which should always be borne in mind, and applied carefully and impartially to any case that arises.

First, the goodness of the man is no guarantee that some view or views he may hold and seek to propagate, are not false and mischievous. If we believe them to be so, we must oppose them, and try to prevent their spread, with whatever degree of earnestness and energy we may think their importance demands. We may sincerely believe him to be a far better man than ourselves; but if we can see that in this respect he is wrong, we must withstand him to the face. In other words, so long as there is error in the Church, controversy is a necessity and a duty. St. Paul "disputed and persuaded;" and in one place, when the quiet peace-loving people could stand it no longer, and turned him out of the synagogue, he hired a room for himself, and there kept up the controversy every day, for two whole years. The result of which was—"that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." That was the fruit of determined, persevering, controversy.

Furthermore: in order to guard others against the evil tendency of this good man's error, it may be necessary to place it in a light, in which he had never looked at it. And he may be very much pained, and feel very indignant, at the way in which you present it to himself and others. But that cannot be helped. It is one of the painful necessities of our present imperfect condition. We are supposing, of course, that you do not misrepresent his views, but only show clearly and forcibly what they really are, and what they come to, or lead to; that you hold them up to view through a magnifier, and not through a distorting medium; that, if you enlarge the portrait, you do it honestly and proportionately, and not turn it into a caricature. The subject may require strong language, and it may be your duty to use it, even though wiser and better men than yourself may be distressed by it. The knowledge that they are so, is a cross that you are called upon to take up; and if it be felt as a cross, it will prove an effectual safeguard against your

CHURCH SERMONS.

over-doing it; if it be not, you need to look anxiously into the state of your own heart, for something must be seriously wrong there.

And this brings us to another consideration, on the opposite side, which it is quite as important that we should allow to have its full weight upon our thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds; namely that some of those who differ from us are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, members of the same spiritual body with ourselves here, and destined to form part of that glorified Church, in which it is our own highest ambition to obtain a place hereafter; that, if we attain unto the resurrection of the just, they will be our most intimate associates throughout eternity. If this is realized as it ought to be, it will, in the first place, perceptibly affect the very tone of our controversy with them. It ought not to prevent us saying anything that we believe the cause of truth absolutely requires: but it will make us very careful to say nothing unnecessarily painful, and very scrupulous to say nothing that approaches to being untrue or unfair. There can be no doubt that grievous sin is often unwittingly committed in this matter. We often scatter "firebrands arrows and death" about us in the most reckless manner, and excuse ourselves by saying, "Am I not in" *battle* for the truth of God? Are not these men opposing the truth? What quarter do they deserve? If you will call to mind the stereotyped forms of denouncing various theological views, you may easily see, by a moment's reflection, that too many of them are utterly false and calumnious. They have simply been chosen as the hardest things that could be said, as the sharpest and most poisoned arrows that could be found; and we have become so familiar with their use, that we scarcely stop to think whether they are true or false. It is much easier, and more effective, to hurl one of these darts, than to consider what is the real nature and extent of the error against which we are contending, and how it may best be pointed out, clearly, honestly, and convincingly.

Now, nothing will tend more to guard us against this, than the recollection that our opponents are not *merely* teachers or abettors of error; some of them are also our brethren in Christ Jesus. In proportion as we realize this, shall we be saved from

the temptation to desire a personal triumph over them ; our object will be, not to stamp upon *them*, but to show them and others the error and danger of their position.

Need we say, how beneficially this will affect our personal intercourse with them ? There are many good men who deprive themselves of the possibility of any mutual friendly intercourse, by letting their differences of opinion on theological or ecclesiastical matters outweigh the fact, that they believe one another to be children of the same Father, trusting to the same Saviour, partakers of the same Spirit, and travelling to the same home. They *believe* this, but they never *think* of it. Their only *thought* about one another is that of antagonism ; and antagonism must, of course, detract from the pleasure of intercourse. The mistake lies in letting the antagonism totally eclipse everything else. Some Churchmen have but one idea about a Dissenter—that he *is* a Dissenter, and that is all they wish to know about him. Some Protestants have but one idea about a Romanist—that he *is* a Romanist, and that is enough for them. The result of this habitual keeping apart from one another is that their alienation of heart is confirmed, and the bitterness of their mutual opposition aggravated. Who can estimate the spiritual injury and loss sustained by them both ?

And then as to its effect upon the world around. Everyone knows what a stumbling-block, the interminable differences of opinions within the Church must present to them that are without. But what are we to do ? We cannot, in conscience, hush them up, as some would have us. We cannot cease “disputing and persuading,” even though it be “with much contention.” We cannot pretend to think that our differences are slight and unimportant. But for that very reason we should strain every nerve to neutralize the injurious effect of this upon those who cannot understand it ; nay, to bring actual good out of the evil, by showing how the attractive power of Christian love can overcome the repelling power of opposing convictions. The good we can do, by showing how we are able to love one another under such enormous difficulties, may far surpass all the harm that is done by the differences themselves. By making light of the difficulties, treating differences of opinion as of little consequence, sneering

at controversies, and creeds, and dogmas, we are virtually making light of the grace which is needed to counteract their influence, and hold us together in spite of them. It is when we are "earnestly contending" for what we believe to be the truth, that we have the best opportunity of manifesting the surpassing excellence of brotherly-love.

And may not this suggest at least one reason for such a state of things having been permitted to arise in the Christian Church? How strange! we cannot help saying again and again. Oh if Christians could only see eye to eye, and join hand to hand, and heart to heart, for the salvation of the world, what a blessing it would be! Yes; and what a blessing it would be if the world needed no salvation; if sin and misery had never been allowed to enter it; if all had remained peace, and harmony, and love. One thing is quite evident, namely, that God intends man to reach his highest glory by no easy path, but by peril, toil, and pain: he is to run, and wrestle, and fight, for the prize. If the Church is failing to carry out God's purpose to the world, He could easily send twelve legions of angels to preach the Gospel from east to west, from north to south; or He could write it in letters of fire on the sky in every language under heaven; or do a thousand other things that would at once compel *intellectual* belief. But He does not. The diversity of opinion in the Church, we are told, makes many men infidels. Very likely indeed. That is the difficulty which *they* have to overcome; and if they *don't* overcome it, they will lose the prize. If they *let* it drive them into infidelity, they must take the consequence, just as *we* must, if we don't overcome *our* difficulties. "To him that overcometh," and to him alone, as we are assured in everyone of the messages to the seven Churches of Asia, is the incorruptible prize, the prize of immortality, promised.

This, however, in no way releases us from the duty of doing all we can to lessen their difficulty, by shewing them that Christianity supplies a bond of union strong enough to defy all the host of controversies which has gathered around it. It is no easy thing to do we admit. Strong antagonism on matters that we feel to be deeply important, does naturally interpose very formidable barriers between man and man. But what of that? Does not everything good require an effort? And does not

every right effort, bring a blessing to the person who makes it? Why are men allowed to trespass against you? Because it is good for you to be compelled to make the effort required to forgive them,—to bring the grace of forgiveness into exercise. And why are they allowed to differ from you, or you from them? Because it is good for you to be compelled to make the effort required to love them as brethren, and to shew that you do so, in spite of all your differences.

Difficulties no doubt will often arise in the application of these principles. But in what science are there not cases of doubt and perplexity? “Now we see through a glass darkly.” And we must be content to cast ourselves upon the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit—in His own Word and in our hearts—to lead us step by step through the mazes of this intricate and tangled path.

First, let us pray for grace, to “buy the truth and sell it not,”—to buy it at any price, and sell it at none. “It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold, and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold” (Job xxviii, 15-19). But though the Truth cannot be purchased with gold, yet it often has to be obtained, and preserved, at a great sacrifice, perhaps of personal feeling, perhaps of worldly gain. Oh! for grace to value the knowledge of God, and the privilege of making Him known to others, above everything else that may be either gained or lost!

“Guard thou the fact; though clouds of night
Down on thy watch-tower stoop,
Though thou should’st see thy heart’s delight
Borne from thee by their swoop.”

Secondly, let us seek to have more and more fully established in our hearts that evidence of spiritual life, which, we are told, arises from the consciousness of brotherly love; “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

CHURCH SERMONS.

And lastly, let us seek to make that evidence more and more clear to others, in the Divinely appointed way—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." For ourselves it may be enough to be thoroughly persuaded in our own minds, that we love all who belong to Christ, and because they belong to Him. But others can know our thoughts and feelings, only by our looks, and words, and deeds. And, in estimating the effect which our conduct towards brethren who differ from us will have upon the world around, let us not forget to include the judgment, which they will be led to form, rightly or wrongly, as to the Christian Church being aliving reality, or, if it be, as to ourselves being living members of it.



A Sermon

BY THE

REV. ALFRED BOWEN EVANS, D.D.,

Rector of St. Mary-le-Strand,

PREACHED AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, POPLAR,

At the Festival Service of Several Parish Choirs,

ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 1872.

“When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.”—2 Chronicles xxix, 27.

A much smaller Bible, my dear brethren, methinks, would suffice many pious persons, than the Bible we possess. Large portions of Holy Writ are, by numbers of Christian people, unused, or judged to be unuseful. Many of the chapters of the Bible are seldom, if ever perused, and we should not be contradicted, perhaps, if we said, that there are whole books of the Bible which, by some among us, have never been read. Not only are some of the “highways” of the territory of Holy Writ “unoccupied,” but it cannot be added that to compensate, for their desertion “the travellers walk through its byways.” As it has been observed with respect to Nature, so may it be observed respecting Revelation, that she is shy of her secrets, and hides her most valuable treasures from the common gaze; so that if we would find them we must turn aside to seek them. Yet, if there be here and there one disposed to explore the rarely trodden paths of the land of that Book which the Lord our God hath given us for an inheritance, and he be competent to lead others in those paths, others are too generally indisposed to follow him. They are like persons, who, ignorant of their way through a tract of strange country, have committed themselves to the care of a guide, but are destitute of proper confidence in his direction, as if they suspected he would involve them in the

very dangers which, but for his acquaintance with the way, it would be all but impossible for them to escape. But these rarely trodden paths of the Divine territory are no unfruitful ones. If we venture into them we find them thickly strewn with instructive suggestions, hidden it may be from the superficial eye under the varied forms of prophecy, parable, poetry, symbol, ceremony, type, and even simple prosaic matters of fact, which it might be supposed did but begin and end in themselves. The green pastures of profitable meditation are here, and the still waters of salutary thought, but they are found to lie frequently out of the beaten road of interpretation. They miss them who never leave that road. We profess, of course, to ascribe less authority to the Apocryphal books of Holy Scripture, as they are called, than we do to the Canonical; yet for the use we make of them, there are some, even of the Canonical books which might as well be Apocryphal. We do our best to remit them to the Apocrypha by leaving their contents unexplored. The lessons hitherto read in the Sunday services of the Church, and the short portions selected from the Epistles and Gospels for the week, which, so far as the former are concerned, are occasionally derived from places in holy Writ which do not occur in the Lessons, is about all of the Bible which many of the people know; and although this be enough to "make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and is much more than multitudes had in the days of old to make them, who, nevertheless, were made thus wise; still it must be said, I think, that for any increase they gather from it to the wisdom of such as are in a 'state of salvation,' it would be the same had the rest of the book not come into their possession.

In referring to the unexplored regions of the Sacred writings it would not be wrong did we name the Books of the Chronicles as among the most untrodden of these hallowed ways. The Church has not hitherto invited us to tread them by her Calendar, either for the Sundays or for the week. We have had a portion of one of these books this evening. By her omission in time past the Church might have been taken to intimate how uninviting these two books are; but we must not hastily draw such a conclusion, seeing that the fact might apply to other portions of the holy Volume which we know to be not uninviting, and the omission of a book from the lectionary of the Church

cannot be more remarkable than many an omission *in* the books which are inserted. For the Bible is an oracle, whose silence upon a multitude of topics, upon which we might not unreasonably have expected it to have spoken, is to the full as wonderful as its speech. Still we suppose that the majority of us would feel but little inclined to turn aside into the by-paths of these Chronicles, though they intersect a right royal country. As the Church disturbs not the solitude of these archives by *her* reading of them, we think it better, perhaps, not to intrude upon it with *ours*, or we conclude, if we did, we should find nothing in them to reward us for our pains.

For once, however, let us turn aside and see what we have here. As we said, a simple,—and but that the word “song,” recalling to our mind its vehicle of poetry, occurs in the statement—a prosaic fact, and that is all. “When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.” Here is the fact; what can we get out of it to recompense ourselves withal to-night? What are its lessons? What does it teach? What does it suggest?

Now, we learn from this particular portion of the record that the good King Hezekiah had been engaged in the restoration of the offices of religion among his people; so that the coincidence of the song with the sacrifice, the fact, beloved, with which we seek to engage your attention, was not a feature of a corrupt, but of a renovated ritual; it was a restoration, as the verse goes on to show, according to the rubric of Israel’s royal choir master, poet, musician, and prophet David, and after the law of God’s servant Moses. “And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David King of Israel.” This Choral service, then, in conjunction with the Sacrifice was a restoration, and not what could be called an innovation. It is important we should note this fact, since, if this union of the song and the sacrifice in the ancient temple had been a ‘corrupt’ instead of a pure ‘following’ of the ‘use’ ordained by King David, if there be a service akin to this in the house of “Christ, who was raised up to sit upon David’s throne”—why should we say if there be?—as there *is* in the house of Christ a Sacrifice and an offering, which as to its reality as far transcends the typical and shadowy service of the house of David as the heavens are higher than the earth; (for our great High Priest, who was also

CHURCH SERMONS.

our sacrifice, who "without spot unto God offered Himself, is passed into the heavens;") it would be an example not for us to imitate in such a service, but for us to avoid. But not so. It is an example, on the contrary, for us not to avoid, but to imitate; for let us mark what follows. "And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." The whole congregation, you see, were worshippers. Though they might not all have been singers, there was no desire on the part of those who could not sing to prevent those singing who could. No disposition—to use a phrase not current now, but current not long ago—to put down the choral service; and "all," the record tells us, "worshippers, singers, and trumpeters, continued until the burnt offering was finished." There was no hurrying away of the people from the temple before the sacrifice was completed, like the departure of the majority of the congregation in the midst of the great Christian oblation, among ourselves. No desertion of the choir stalls by their occupants when the song ought to be going on with the sacrifice, as in many of our Cathedrals and Parish Churches, after there has been singing, leaving the oblation to be perfected by a handful of persons in silence, as if they were ashamed, and as if those who departed were ashamed of what they were left to do. Oh, no! "when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also, and all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded, and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." And shall we, Christians, who believe that 'ancient forms like these gave place to the nobler rites of grace,' not do so unto the Lord our God, at the more glorious Sacrifice, whose song, though it may be silent here and there, in the house of the Church on earth, will roll its mighty diapasons for ever in "God's house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens? Believe me, my dear young friends—for most of you, if not all, are young—the members of the several choirs, believe me that the reverent rendering musically of the offices of the Church comes of devotion to the chief ordinance of the Church, the blessed sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Reverence for, devotional attendance upon that will ensure a reverent rendering of every other office of the Church, and nought else will.

Now the Jewish sacrifices, my brethren, we need scarcely

CHURCH SERMONS.

remind you, were various in kind, in intention, in characteristics, and we could easily show you, had we time to do so, that whatever might have been their kind, whether the burnt offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the peace offering, or the meat offering, all these descriptions of offerings, with their every characteristic and intention came together, and were gathered up and fulfilled in the one, 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction' of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Probably the most significant, as the most comprehensive of these sacrifices was that known as the burnt offering. In the Hebrew Bible, what is translated "burnt offering" is derived from a word which signifies "to ascend" or "to go up." In the Septuagint, however, it is rendered by the word "holocaust," for this reason, that while others of the sacrifices were partly consumed and partly eaten, this sacrifice of the burnt offering was to be altogether consumed; it was wholly to go up, to ascend, or to be exhaled before the Lord God, in the fire of the altar. No portion of the animal offered was saved except the skin. But both the characteristics we refer to meet in the sacrifice of Christ "the Son of the Blessed, Who loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour." A whole Christ, His body, His soul, His blood, His divinity (for Christ cannot be divided), was offered for our sins in the sight of men and of angels, on that Cross which His sacrifice dignified into an Altar. But more than this; since "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore do we keep the feast." We are privileged to feed upon the sacrifice and unless we do so, He who is both the sacrifice and the priest assures us we have no life in us. For Almighty God, to use the words made ready to our hands by the Prayer Book—hath given His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in His holy Sacrament. And when this "offering began" on earth, truly did "the song of the Lord begin" in the courts of Heaven, which hath never since ceased; for all the faithful from Adam downwards who dwell in the rest of Paradise, filled with the hope of glory, have held their places there by virtue of the meritorious oblation which was then without spot presented unto God.

But we cannot help observing, that between a sacrifice and a song there seems to be an incongruity. Where there is a sacrifice we might think there could scarcely be a song. A sad

and an awful sight at the best is an offering of a living thing. The innocent victim, defenceless, and unconscious of its doom—a bullock, or a lamb yet more touching in its innocence, the victim slain, and not spared for its crying, the reeking gore, the devouring flame, the ascending smoke obscuring yet increasing the horror of the scene: what, we might ask, could all this have had to do with singing, or a service of song with it; except to be silenced before it? May we not believe that the devout offerers of the oblation were enabled by faith to look forward to that better, that perfect sacrifice, which in the fulness of time would really secure to the sinful sons of men the blessings of pardon and purification, which this did but dimly outline; and that for this reason it was that “when the burnt offering began,” strange as it may seem, “the song of the Lord began also”? Thus, while we said that where there was a sacrifice we could scarcely look for a song, we might have asked rather, How can there be a song where there is no sacrifice? Whatsoever may have been true of the faithful of old, true, indeed, it is of us, that but for the sacrifice there could not have been a song. No sacrifice, no song. This is an abbreviation of the whole truth of the gospel of our salvation by Christ. No sacrifice, no song for us. The “offering of Jesus Christ, once for all, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” holy, harmless, undefiled, yet knowing all that should come upon Him—the tree of scorn, the outstretched victim, the darkened land, the rent rocks, the opened graves, the Sufferer’s sevenfold wail—all this was very dreadful for heaven or earth to look upon. Oh! that it may inspire you and me with a salutary horror of the sin which caused it all. Still it is the source of all our joy. Yea, of the “joy there is among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Yea, of the joy of Christ Himself, “Who for the joy that was set before Him, of giving repentance, and remission of sins, and of bringing many unto glory, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Marvel we not then, as that oblation was a type and an earnest of this, “that when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.”

We have spoken of the different characteristics of the Jewish offering. There is one distinction, brethren which we cannot but advert to more particularly, and it is this: that while some of the oblations were free-will offerings, others were offerings of

strict obligation. The burnt offering was an offering of obligation. We said that Hezekiah had been engaged in the restoration of the institutions of the former Covenant, and we may infer from what we read, that one of the chief difficulties of his work lay in this, that the people had come to treat matters of obligation as matters of free will ; that they had gone so far even as to regard the burnt offering itself as a free-will offering to be presented when and as they pleased. Hezekiah, therefore, had to reinstate it in its rightful dignity as a sacrifice of obligation. "What then ? Are we better than they ?" We fear the answer as to multitudes, in the language of the Apostle must be—"No, in no wise." It is a fearful responsibility we take upon ourselves when we transfer what the Most High makes a matter of obligation into a matter of choice ; when we substitute our *may* for God's *must*. Yet that oblation of the precious body and blood of Christ in the blessed Eucharist, in union with, deriving all its efficacy from, and with the like intention as the all sufficient Sacrifice once offered upon the Cross, how is it regarded by thousands for whom Jesus who is now "alive for evermore, having the keys of Hades and of Death," suffered on that tree ? As a thing to be done as Christ and as often soever as Christ hath commanded it to be done—at least every Lord's day, as in this Church in which we are now assembled ? Alas ! no, but as a free-will offering to be done as and when priest and people please, or, if they please, not at all. And this in the face of the solemn words to our Lord and heavenly Father—wheresoever and by whomsoever it is done, Although we are unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our *bounden* duty and service. And this our bounden duty and service is spoken of, you will recollect, in the same prayer, as this our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving : not that the praise and thanksgiving constitute the sacrifice, as if there were no sacrifice, but these, as some people suppose, if so, we might as well say that the song which went up with the burnt offering of old was the burnt offering, but not that they accompanied it. The whole office from beginning to end is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ; "and when this offering," without blood and without fire, as it is the presentation before God of His merit Who being "raised from the dead dieth no more, and over whom death hath no more dominion," "begins, the song of the Lord beginneth, or ought to

begin also." It begins ! but in how many places does the song continue, as it did in the time of Hezekiah, until the offering is finished ? Is there any apology, in prudence or in propriety, (there may be in Puritanism,) for the song's breaking off, when and where there is singing, as it so often does in the midst of the service of praise, leaving versicle, and response, the Sanctus, and the Gloria in Excelsis, musically dumb ? Can a spark of real gratitude to Almighty God, Father of all mercies, for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, consist with this continual absence of the song from the sacrifice, if even the sacrifice itself be not absent with the song ? Is this to follow the example of the men of old with whom, as it is written, "when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded : and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished ?"

But if the sound of the music, beloved, be low, if the song have been hushed in many an earthly temple of God, its streams in the heavenly temple are rolling on in full flow to swell the ocean of everlasting praise. Would we, with the redeemed from the earth, learn that song so as to join in it in the Church above—Oh ! let us seek "with the spirit, and with the understanding also," to awaken its slumbering echoes in the Church below ; for as soon as that one offering, by which Jesus hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified," was presented unto the Father, did that song begin "To Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and had made us kings and priests unto God," which hath never ceased, neither will cease for ever—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever, Amen."



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 24.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

*Ireland Professor of Exegesis in the University
of Oxford.*

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 7, 1872.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."—1 Peter i, 3.

St. Peter addresses his Epistle, not as St. Paul's manner is, to some particular Church, but to Christians scattered over a wide extent of territory—"throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia—that is Asia Minor—and Bithynia." It is true that these districts join on to each other; that they are all confined between the Black Sea and the Gulf of Cyprus; and that at the present day it is probable that the cruel yoke of the Turk has, in the course of four centuries and a half, reduced them to a dead level of barbarism, which has buried beneath its ruins the sharp provincial distinctions which existed in antiquity. But when St. Peter wrote, the Roman rule was established throughout all those districts; yet the Roman Empire was still young and the Roman rule was universally tolerant of provincial characteristics; and the people to whom he wrote differed not less widely, to say the least, than do the inhabitants of the various States of Europe, in the present day. Doubtless, the strangers who were established among them were mainly converts from Judaism, since it was of these that St. Peter had the particular care, after the division of labour, which St. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Galatians. They would all have the blood of Abraham in their veins; but notwithstanding this

sense of a common descent, which, since their conversion, had lost its specific advantageous value, they would have shared in many respects the diverse provincial sympathies of the populations around them—they would have been parted from one another by different customs, different characteristics of life, different commercial interests, and in not a few cases by differences of dialect and even of language; by different relations with the various local governments, by very different ideas upon a great many subjects which form the staple of interest in ordinary life. But as St. Peter thought over these scattered strangers—thought of their diversities from each other, he felt that they had one thing in common. They were sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And this implied much beyond. It meant that the horizon of their various lives was enormously enlarged, and in one direction; that they were, amid all their differences, living, not for this world merely, but for a world beyond. And so St. Peter burst forth into a hymn of praise—for such it is—a hymn, which the fertile and pathetic genius of a great musician has made familiar to the worshippers at this Cathedral, and at many other of the Christian Churches of this land—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for you.”

To the question—What has the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, done for us Christians?—a great many answers may be given.

Of these, the answer which is perhaps, of the first importance—the answer which Christ's own Apostles would have given—is this: That by rising from the dead, Jesus Christ proved that He had a right to speak about God, a right to speak about the old religion of His countrymen, a right to speak about the religious conduct of the most influential classes among His countrymen; above all, that He had a right to speak about Himself, as He had spoken. When He was asked to give a sign, that is, a something which might be accepted as evidence, of the commission which He had from heaven, He gave this; He said that, just as the old Prophet, Jonah, had been buried out of sight in the whale and yet had been restored to his ministry and to his countrymen, so He, Himself, though he should be stricken beneath the pangs and convulsions of death, though laid in the darkness of the tomb in the very heart of the earth, yet would at a given time burst the fetters of the grave, and would rise again. Accordingly, when this prediction had been actually realized, the fact was appealed to, as we see from the Acts of the Apostles, by the earliest preachers of Christianity,

almost in every single sermon. It was the fact which evidently did their work, in compelling men to listen to what they had to say, about their risen Lord, and in making faith in Him at least easy, better than any other topic ; and St. Paul puts it forward when he begins his great Epistle to the Romans, by simply saying that Jesus had been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

But the Resurrection has done other things for us besides this, its great evidential achievement ; and upon one of these I desire to dwell this afternoon. It has endowed Christians, who treat it as a serious matter of fact, with the grace, the great grace of Hope. St. Peter feels the preciousness of this when he exclaims that God, the Father of our Lord, is blessed, if only because, from His abundant mercy, He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by His Son's resurrection from the dead.

It is a truism to say it—but, as truisms are apt to be more lost sight of than paradoxes, from their very obviousness, it will bear repeating—it is a truism, that we cannot get on without Hope. Hope is not, as the proverb has said, merely the *salt*, but it is the very sinew of man's life. There is no doubt about the fact, explain it as we may, that the human mind must, to a great extent, live in and for the future. The brute, indeed, is content with the present. He feeds, he fights, he gambols, he sleeps, he makes the most of each successive sensation ; because his attention is not diverted by any forecasts about a coming time ; he apprehends nothing until the experience of his senses—appealing to the faint faculty of association which he undoubtedly possesses, forces the apprehended danger, or pleasure, right in upon him. He has no view or theory of his life, of his place in creation, of his relation to other living creatures about him, of his capacity for and title to a coming destiny of any kind. And herein the brute differs from man ; because man is so little content with, and occupied or exhausted by the thoughts, the sensations, the interests of the present moment, that he cannot but look forward, whether to a nearer or a more remote future. His capacity for excellence is exactly proportioned to his power of throwing himself onward into the future, which is yet beyond his reach, and which may be always beyond it.

This truth holds good, whether we look on man as an individual, or as a member of society. What is the real object—the highest effort—of any real Education ? Is it merely teaching a boy so much reading and arithmetic, so much history and geography, so much natural science and humane literature, so much political and mathematical truth ? No. It is much more than this. The great object of the wise educator is to set before the boy some future to which he may aspire ; some future which

may fire his best enthusiasms ; some future which may supply him with a strong motive for making the most of his present opportunities, some future upon which, during the drudgery and toil of his earlier tasks, his eye may rest, and which may be the object of his hope. It is, of course, a difficult and a very delicate thing to do this, without developing in the boy, the vice of a purely selfish ambition. But the thing can be done ; and, if education is to be vigorous and thorough, it must be done. What becomes of the boy whose every lesson, and exercise, every effort to remember, to understand, to *think*, to compose, is strictly without an object—is only an isolated and sterile labour ; having no end beyond itself, or, at best, none beyond the consequences of neglecting it ? And does not the same rule hold good in later life ? The boy in time becomes a man ; he is the father of a family, and he transfers to his children some of the hope he cherished once for himself. He thinks less of what they are, than of what it is probable they will be a few years hence. He thinks over their characters, their tastes, their dispositions, the evidence they have shown of fitness for a particular work in life. He enters into a calculation of probabilities, he tries to picture their various positions and occupations in later years. So strong, so penetrating, is his sympathy sometimes, that in them, as men have said, he lives his own boyhood over again ; only, as it must be, with the larger experience and the wider horizon of his manhood. He may—God only knows—he may be destined to terrible disappointment ; but then, and this is his strength, he lives in hope. It is this hope which enables him to work hard for his children, to deny himself lawful enjoyments, to put up with ingratitude, with worrying, with dulness, with perversity, in these, the objects of his strongest affections, in a manner which, in any other case, would be impossible.

Nor is this less true of men's specific work in life. Hope is ever the motive principle of the exertions which command success. The statesman, the artist, the man of letters, the great chemist, the great engineer, all as a matter of course look forward. Minds of the lower type look forward to the reputation which will be won by success. Minds of the higher order look forward to the happiness of doing some work, some little work for God, by doing some real service to their generation, or to posterity. And it is this hope which sustains them under all the discouragements of weak health, of unfriendly criticism, unfruitful efforts to mould intractable materials, of conscious present inability to compass and express in fact the ideal excellence which floated before their mind's eye, and originally aroused them to exertion.

Nor is hope less essential to associations of men, than to man in his individual capacity. The institution, the society, the

nation, which has no future in its eye is already doomed. It may still exist; but its life—its moral life—is a thing of the past. An army is never thoroughly demoralised until the hope of victory is quite gone. A nation is not ruined until it has reached the point at which it remarks that it can make out no prospect of expansion, of development, or of progress; the point at which it turns regretfully in upon itself, confessing it has exhausted its destiny and has only to await the onset from without, or the collapse from within, which shall seal the doom of which it has already felt the terrible presentiment.

And, as hope is thus necessary to the temporal well-being of associations of men, and of individual men, so is it, above all things, essential to the highest well-being of man—as man. The hope upon which states, institutions, artists, painters, military men, politicians rest, is directed to objects within the sphere of sense and time. But man, as man—man in his deepest self, must look beyond sense and time; for man is confronted everywhere with the barrier which arrests or dissolves all human hopes: he is confronted with death. Does *all* really end with death? Death is *the* question of questions. It is the first and greatest question which confronts man when he sets himself to think seriously about his place in the universe, about his real being—about what we call his destiny. It is impossible to put off permanently the consideration of this question. It rises up to life whenever there is a resurrection in any man's mind of serious thought. It is as fresh, as interesting, as full of unspeakable and unparalleled importance for this generation as it was for the last. It will be just as much so for the next generation as for this. Science does not solve that question. A materialist civilisation cannot; it would bury it out of sight. Time does not tell upon it. There it is; that question of questions for each and for all of us:—"Whither am I going?"

"What are you going to do?" said an elderly friend to a young man just entering upon life. "I hope," was the answer, "to complete my education at the University." "And what then?" "I shall learn a profession and I shall devote myself to it." "And what then?" "I shall marry as soon as I can afford it." "And what then?" "No doubt, then I shall have enough to do in educating and providing for my family." "And what then?" "Well, of course, in time, I shall get to be an old man." "And what *then*?" asked his persevering questioner. "In time, I suppose—well, I suppose I shall die." "And what *then*?" There was silence. The young man had never looked so far ahead as that.

My brethren, man needs an answer to that question, if the deepest springs of his being are to be really reached. And if we cast our eyes upon the forms of opinion which lie outside the Christian Church, what do we find? There is of course the

materialist answer, that all *does* end with death—that man's higher being is but the vitality of his animal frame and perishes with it, perishes utterly and for ever. But this answer does not really satisfy man. It does not satisfy any man in his best and most thoughtful moods. Why should men be haunted and possessed as they are by the idea, the *instinct* of some coming immortality? Why should this idea be so general, or so importunate, as upon the whole it undoubtedly is? If the philosopher Descartes was right in arguing that the world-wide idea of God in the soul of man could only be explained by the *fact* of His existence, is it not equally reasonable to argue that the idea of immortality, which is so general, arises equally from the *fact* of our immortality as human beings? Because, how else are we to explain the prevalence of this idea? Why should such a hope, such an apprehension, such a presentiment—call it what you will—of an existence after death be as deep, and almost universal as it is? A superstition, which has no basis in fact, has its limits in time and territorial sway. But, wherever man has risen above the lower stages of an animalised life, the idea of a future in some instinctive way at least has dawned upon him, if only as the correlative to the idea of God. As our own Addison makes Cato say in his soliloquy:

“It must be so—Plato, thou reason'st well—
Else, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or, whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into nought? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.”

Now this general impression or instinct of immortality has been taken to pieces. It has been traced, sometimes, to the idea that the soul is of itself indestructible, as being a simple or uncompounded essence. Sometimes, as by the great German poet, Goëthe, to the profound conviction that the mental and moral activity which has lasted up to the very moment of dissolution cannot be arrested by the death of man's outward husk, and must continue in some other form and sphere beyond it. Sometimes, it has been traced to the sense of justice which refuses to believe that the moral Governor of the world will not provide a future in which to redress the terrible inequalities of our present state of being. But so long as these convictions do not rest upon some fact which is independent of our minds and of all our varying and shifting moods of thought, and feeling, whatever may be their intellectual value—and I would not for one instant be understood to disparage it—they are not, as a matter of fact, strong enough to govern conduct, to restrain passion, to invigorate the sense of duty, to make men embark in

serious ventures on the strength of them. And for this reason, they are only found in the old Pagan and the modern non-Christian world, in any tolerable degree of distinctness among the cultivated classes. They never have influenced the great masses of persons; or, when they have done so, they have, upon the whole, produced that depressed view of life of which we find traces in the literature which abounded in parts of Europe simultaneously with the great outbreak of infidel opinion in the closing years of the last century. Life, it was thought a failure. To have lived was upon the whole a misfortune. Moral apathy was in reality common sense. Moral or spiritual enthusiasm was abject fanaticism. Over such a generation the Psalmist's sentence might, indeed be written: "They lie in hell like sheep, death gnaweth upon them, and the righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning: their beauty shall consume in the sepulchre out of their dwelling."

No man, who has not a clear belief in a future life can have permanently a strong sense of duty. A man may, indeed, persuade himself during various periods of his existence that this sense of duty is the better and purer from not being bribed by the promise of future reward, or stimulated as he would perhaps say unhealthily, by the dread of future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life, if he has not an eternal future before him, is, depend upon it, feeble and impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action; it is that he has a false estimate, because an under-estimate, of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the bearing, the instincts, and the sense of noble birth and lofty destiny which properly belong to him. He is like the heir to a great name or a throne, who is bent on forgetting his lineage and responsibilities in a self-sought degradation. Man cannot, even if he would, live with impunity, only as a more accomplished kind of animal than are the creatures around him. Man is by the terms of his existence a being of eternity, and he cannot unmake himself; he cannot take up a position which abdicates his higher prerogatives, without, sooner or later, sinking into degradations which are in themselves a punishment. He needs a hope resting on something beyond the sphere of sense and time. And God has given him one, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Lord, indeed, in the plainest language, taught the doctrine of the future life—"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you."—"Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him."

Passages of this kind, from among the very words of Christ, might be multiplied. In teaching that man *does* live after death, our Lord was teaching what with various degrees of distinctness, Pagans and Jews had taught before Him. He contributed to the establishment of this truth in the deepest convictions of men, not merely by lessons taught in words, but by a fact palpable to the senses, when He rose, after saying that He would rise from the grave. *He broke up the spell of the law of death!* He made it plain within the precincts of this visible world that a world unseen and eternal, but most actual, awaits us hereafter. He converted hopes, surmises, speculations, trains of inference, into strongest certainties. "Because I live, ye shall live also." This was the motto which henceforth Faith, under the guidance of Reason, descried as the legend traced over the doorway of His empty sepulchre. For that He had risen was not a secret whispered to the few; it was a fact verified by the senses of more than five hundred witnesses. It was established in the face of the jealous, implacable criticism which endeavoured to silence by violence its eloquent protestation, that there is indeed a world beyond the grave.

Not that the fact of Christ's resurrection could force itself upon reluctant minds, or, I would rather say, upon reluctant wills. In the earliest ages, as now, there were expedients enough at hand to evade its force: it was a trick of the disciples; or a phantom apparition; or the product of an excited woman's imagination; or it was a prosaic transfer to the history of an individual of that which was true, but only true of the deathless idea which He had taught to man. The evangelical narrative, the conviction of the earliest Church, the moral strength of the Church, advancing through blood, advancing through untold sufferings, to the heights of a world-wide empire, resists these expedients. It resists them as inconsistent with reason and with fact. St. Paul's argument—"If Christ be not risen our labour is vain," is really an appeal to common sense. Is it probable the Apostle suggests, that we, Apostles, should have forfeited everything, surrendered everything, should be prepared to endure everything, for the sake of a transcendental faith, without having been careful to assure ourselves of the literal truth of the fact on which that faith rests?

There are three forms of interest which must be accorded to such a fact as the Resurrection. The first is the interest of curiosity in a wonder which is altogether at variance with the course of nature. This interest may exist in a high degree, observing and registering the fact, yet never for a moment getting beyond the fact. Then there is the interest of active reason which is satisfied that such a fact must have consequences, and is anxious to trace them; an interest which may lead a man to say that the Resurrection does, intellectually speaking,

prove the truth of the mission of Christ, although the man may know nothing of the power of Christ's blood and of His spirit. The third kind of interest is practical, moral, spiritual. It is an effort to answer the question—What does Christ's Resurrection say to me? what does it mean to me? If it is true—if Christianity through it is true—what ought to be the effect on my thoughts, my feelings, my life? And St. Peter would answer all these questions. Thought, feeling, life, should be invigorated by the force of that living hope. But, then, this absorbing moral interest does not come of any ordinary process of observation and reason, like these two earlier forms. St. Peter says, using a remarkable expression, "We are begotten into a lively hope." It is not the outcome of our natural mind, or of common-sense; though it does not contradict it. It is the product of the Divine breath playing upon the soul, and giving it the new birth—the new capacity for life. Of this birth, the Father is the author; the Eternal Spirit is the instrument; union with Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, the essence and the effect.

It does much else for us, this new birth; but this not least among them—it endows us with a living hope. Looking to the risen Christ, we Christians live even more in the future than in the present. It is part of our new nature to do so, just as surely as it is natural to the Pagan to be engrossed with the things of sense and time. St. Peter calls this hope a "lively" or a living one. What does he mean? There are within many a soul traces of powers, of ideas, of feelings, which once lived, but now have died away. We investigate them, it may be, from time to time, as we should investigate the dead ruin of a mental Pompeii or a moral Herculaneum. Every man, in later life, finds this to be increasingly the case. He finds that the soil of his mind is more and more strewn with the husks of hopes which have ceased to live. Time and disappointment do their work, and we bury away our early enthusiasms as quietly as we can, as one after another they cease to burn within us.

But the hope of the Christian lives. Earthly disappointments do but force him to make the most of it. The lapse of time brings him nearer to its great object. It is not a hope, subject to the laws of decay, which tell upon the strength and vitality of a merely human hope. His enthusiasm and the vigour of his life grow in exactly an inverse proportion to that of the decaying frame upon which years have done, or are doing, their work, and which is drawing onwards in its course towards the portals of the grave.

We can ask ourselves few questions so important as, Have I this hope? and, if not, what is the real value of any other hopes that I may have? They do not take me beyond the frontiers of time. They must fail and perish sooner or later—when the end draws near. They must be buried utterly and for ever in the

grave; for man shall carry nothing away with him when he dies, neither shall his hope follow him. A hope worth having is, as the Apostle says, "an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast," and "entereth within the veil." Its object is thrown beyond the narrow frontiers of this life, beyond this kingdom of change and death. Not to have this hope is to be living at random. It is to be drifting on towards eternity without a chart in hand, or a harbour in view. No cry for help can be too earnest or too piercing if such be our case. Nor shall we cry in vain.

And if we have this hope, what are the tests of our possessing it? One is that earthly things sit easily upon us. We are not uninterested in them; but we are not enslaved by them. To have caught a real glimpse of the Eternal, is to have lost heart and relish for the things of time. To have the imperishable clearly in view, is to perceive the insignificance of all which passes away. A living hope of an inheritance which is incorruptible, enables the Christian to understand the real proportions of things. Another test is a willingness to make sacrifices for this hope. We do not really cherish it till we have asked ourselves the question—What difference do my hopes of another world make in my daily life? What do I do or leave undone, which I should not do or leave undone, if I believed that all really ended at death? What changes would be made in my habits, my occupations, my modes of thought and feeling if—to put a horrible supposition—I were aware to-morrow, that Christ's conquest of the eternal world for me was a fable? Depend upon it, the sincerity of our hopes may be measured by the sacrifices we have made, or are prepared to make on behalf of them. He who ventures little, hopes for little. He who has the hope of the heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal, lays up treasure in it; and, that he may do so, surrenders all that need be surrendered here. The last test is inward peace, and its accompaniment—habitual cheerfulness. Though the Christian may have plenty of anxiety, he is habitually light-hearted. His soul has found its anchorage in Jesus Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified, Christ interceding. He wants no more. The events of life may bear hardly upon him; they do not touch his real self, any more than the storm which ruffles the surface of the ocean, can agitate the depths below. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.

Eternal Jesus! Who, when Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, fix our eyes on that, our heavenly inheritance; that, washed in Thy blood, sanctified by Thy Spirit, we may live indeed, for that world from which we shall look back upon death as the gate of an existence which is really life!

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. THOS. JAS. ROWSELL, M.A.,

*Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen, and Rector of St.
Margaret's, Lothbury.*

PREACHED AT ST. MARGARET'S, LOTHBURY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1872.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine."—John x, 14.

We are still, my brethren, in the midst of the Easter Season. The Church calls us to stay—to linger in the beautiful and holy light of our Lord's resurrection, as though with a fond desire that no single hue of brightness, not one ray of truth, should be missing to our souls; that we might open our hearts to receive all the joy and all the grace that the blessed Redeemer brings to us, in the rising from the dead. The Church, now, as in her infancy, seems as though she had "departed from the sepulchre with great joy"—as though she still ran to bring His disciples word. Again, now, as then, all His disciples are 'glad' when, with the vision of their soul, with their thankfulness and worship, "they see the Lord." And this season of the Church lies straight along the outward season of the year. In our climate, Easter Day and all the great forty days after, are correspondent to this very beautiful season of the outer year. All around, in the country, in the lanes, the fields, the woods, is the bursting of the life from the death. All around us is unutterably sweet. The blossoms that cover the gay boughs, the herbage springing from the sod, the sweet streams, cooling fruits and fair flowers—

" All rise to the praise of their God
And shall man the great Master of all.
The only insensible proof?
Forbid it, fair gratitude's call!
Forbid it, devotion and love!"

If we cherish the grace of God within us, strive in His presence to keep our souls and bodies pure, if we are endeavouring to live as He would have us—in happiness, because in godliness—by a righteous life; then, by a kind of spiritual force we can invest all outward objects with that life which is within us, which is Christ within us, which we have in kindred with Him "who is the life of every man that cometh into the world." By it we can invest all the things we look upon with something

of the tender glory of our God, and see them as from His presence with something of His loving and blessed sight. My brethren, this life which is hid with Christ in God, can project and throw itself into a kind of atmosphere around, so that, as we walk and live and move and have our being in it, all things are still more beautiful, because we see them with our Father's eye, as belonging to Him, as love-tokens and messages from Him to us. We can recognize in them something of the joy of our Lord, and receive back from them the very joy we throw out over each. Thus it seems, as we walk beside the Saviour, as though He again speaks many things in parables to us, and, when we need it, kindly interprets the parables He speaks. All nature is then but as the chords of some mighty instrument over which the breath of the Spirit of God passes, vibrating into perfect music and harmony with His own blessed will. We seem taken by the hand by Him who leadeth us as the Good Shepherd, to behold the fowls of the air, how He careth for them—the lilies of the field, how they grow, and how not even Solomon in all his magnificence, was equal to one of them in glory. And not only so, but the Good Shepherd leadeth us out and showeth us the sheep and the lambs scattered widely over the hills of God; and there takes up His allegory, and speaks again to the recesses of the soul.

Perhaps, on this occasion, when He was speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd, in contrast with the false ones and the hirelings, there was in His mind the poor blind man of whom we read in the preceding chapter, whom the Good Shepherd, leaving the ninety-and-nine, went to seek and to save, finding him lonely, sitting in the Temple, musing on that marvellous mercy of love and glory which had been shown upon him by the healing hand of the Redeemer, and wondering who should ever send home to his soul the interpretation of so unspeakable a pity and love. The shepherds of the day had scorned the man and tossed him from them, as hirelings ever will; the sacerdotal power having scarcely a word except of excommunication and severity for those who are driven out. The Good Shepherd, musing on this, may have again joined His disciples, and passing with them from the Temple over one of the sloping hills that stand as watch-towers around the city of Jerusalem—of which travellers speak and tell us that on them they have often seen the sight that met the eyes of the disciples—the shepherds and the sheep scattered far and wide in the fields. In such a moment, it may be, the Lord spoke home to them, and to us of that light which is within us, which God has created because He hath made man in His own image—the light which is in everyone of us, however we may have obscured or darkened or tried to quench. God gave it to us, and by His present mercy, He is calling out and giving us power to respond

CHURCH SERMONS.

to the light that is without, when the light that is within, is evoked and cherished. Yea, to him that hath shall be given. And our Lord here, as in all other parts of His life, showed to the disciples how God's revelation may come—not, perhaps, in the Church, not, perhaps, from the sermon of the preacher, not, perhaps, even from the words of the Book of God, not from the services of the Temple; but, because all things are vocal with God's Holy Spirit, it may be the sight of the sheep on the mountain-side, or the flower of the field, through which the outer light shall call forth the light that is within us; for God Almighty speaks so tenderly to His children, and by every pathway He sends light to call us out to the marvellous light of His mercy. And I believe that our blessed Redeemer, accepting all our conditions as Son of Man, accepted this amongst the rest—that He should learn His Father's will from the flower of the field, the fowls of the air, the sheep on the mountains—that by the hills of Nazareth, by the lake-side of the Sea of Galilee, over the hills around Jerusalem, He found lessons at every turn of His gracious way. Grossly those men err who should suppose that the green valleys, and the springs, and the rocks were things indifferent to that Shepherd's thoughts. Knowing what lessons the Father whom He knew had conveyed to Him, He opens our eye to see, awakens our ear to hear, that all nature should be musical to those whose hearts are stayed on God.

"I am the Good Shepherd." How dear and cherished is this passage to every bosom in Christendom! In all the Churches, may I not say, the Good Shepherd is the one universal favourite emblem of Thee, oh! Holy Christ? We all know it so well! Some of us remember it in the earliest pictures of our childhood, which hung on the nursery walls. If we travel, we see it in the churches of various lands. We have seen it over the doorway of the Lutheran Church in Germany; we have seen it on the walls of the Catholic Churches of France, and on the way-side in Switzerland; and we know it well in our own homes, in our dear native land. It is dear to us all. Whatever else we quarrel about, this is the emblem that strikes home to the heart of every one of us. We know it in statuary, in poetry, in music. It has inspired genius with the highest aims, ennobled it with the most tender purposes—directing it to speak to man as from God Himself. In childhood, we find this is the emblem which makes Jesus known to us better than any other thought which childhood can receive. When we have, alas! departed from the sweetness and the light of childhood's purity, and known what it is to lose our way, to err and stray from God's bright light ways, like lost sheep; amid the darkness of sorrow, the tears of repentance and struggles against evil, in the hour of well-nigh despair—"I am the Good Shepherd" rises from the darkness like a blessed vision of hope in the soul; and Thou, O Lord, looking

upon us in these straying ways, makest Thyself known, as the Good Shepherd, who giveth His life for the sheep! While we look, in one picture at the Good Shepherd with the lambs in His arms; in the other we see the struggling sheep still restless; not yet given back wholly to Him, who with the mightiness of tender strife carries him on His shoulders, His countenance beaming with the unspeakable joy of One who comes to seek and to save that which was lost.

Himself, therefore, is the idea; that which He had received as the thought of the Shepherd. What He had seen in the fields corresponded with what He had seen in the history of His own land. Abraham, Moses, and David, were the Shepherds who had portrayed, as with broken lights, Him who could say with Divine faith—"I am the Good Shepherd." He tells us He came to educate us; to lead us in the paths wherein God directs us to walk. He was the perfect and gracious Son of man; not taking other ways than ours, not choosing other paths than those which God, in His loving providence, ordains for the children of men. In the path of sorrow, of trouble, or of joy, still He trod the way of man, and made Himself an everlasting name. And it is God's will that, as He leads us, His own innermost life expresses itself; and one expression of it is that He goes on the very paths on which the sheep must go, and—Oh, most merciful guidance!—that whenever any turn of the road arrives, at every juncture of circumstance, at every pressure of trial, He is ready to sacrifice Himself, in order that He may lead the sheep aright. All godliest ambition, all fine efforts of the soul, all your best and holiest desires, are but the answer to Him who is leading you on His way. However we may be learned, great or noble, still the Heir of all the ages is the wisest, and noblest, and holiest of all; and He can lead us to all true nobility and ambition along the road of which He says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." You who know His kind providence know that it is a sign—to take one out of many—of the Good Shepherd, that He looks forward and prepares beforehand for all the wants of His sheep; leading them in and out, that they may find pasture. He makes Himself known by making the Father known to us. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." Be assured of this—all resistance to His will, all our sin, all our errings, are by His most blessed Providence still watched over, and still His constraining love is drawing us back to the haven where we would be. I ask you to remember any pangs, any heartaches, or any trouble, which any evil way has brought upon your conscience; any struggle you had when you were about to do a wrong deed. Perhaps you did it; but only after pain and deadly effort that had an ungodly victory. But even in that hour there was a dim feeling

that One, in His providence, was watching you and giving you that uneasy, restless feeling, that the Good Shepherd was constraining you by His love to come back and not sin against God. And this is the will of God, where He tells us He leaves the ninety-and-nine to go after one. Shall that blessed Will be frustrated—disappointed? I know not how God may draw us back to Himself. Perhaps by chastisement, perhaps by bitter disappointment, perhaps by great humiliation. But of this am I confident, that the Divine Will must be fulfilled; and that, as He came to seek and to save that which was lost, save and bless them He will.

What a comfort it is to think of, to reflect upon and to believe in the Good Shepherd? Did you ever read inwardly and digest, the twenty-third Psalm? Read it this evening. You will have some minutes or an hour at home still, before going to rest. Particularly any of you who are troubled in mind, sorrow-stricken, tried by some trial which you know of, and know that your God knows of. Take the psalm and read it again as in the sight of God. Sink into it; as you would sink into the very arms of God, forgetting everything else but just this:—"The Lord is my shepherd, therefore, can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort: He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of right-eousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me."

Just let one's-self sink into that; then, when we come out again, and look at our family sorrow, at the troubles of the week and the labours we have to endure, they seem all as nothing. They are but parts of this providential guidance, this merciful and fatherly ordinance which He has appointed in His love. The eye can, throughout the light of meditation, see the Good Shepherd leading, and strengthening, and encouraging us until we feel as St. Paul feels—"Oh, now, looking on Thee, my Saviour, I can do all things through Thee, who strengtheneth me." Our Easter collect most beautifully brings out this idea:—"We humbly beseech Thee that, as by Thy special grace preventing us"—that is, going before us—"Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect." The good desires are the fruits of His work—the Good Shepherd caring for us from first to last.

In joyous days, in spiritual moments of thankfulness, how this providence of God comes out in the thought of the Good Shepherd. For instance—"All hail!" the welcome the risen Saviour gives to the drooping and troubled Church. Just as we need the most, as our hearts are stricken, and we wonder whether we shall meet our departed friends again, He makes us glad and says, "All hail!" Sometimes the music of the praise of God

CHURCH SERMONS.

comes on the soul after we have brought His grace to some good effect. We know how the good Samaritan went home that evening after he had given up everything for the wounded man on the road. We know how Zaccheus received his merciful Guest, who blessed him from that hour; how Nathaniel heard the word—"I saw thee under the fig-tree"; how Mary Magdalen knew Him and cried in all the joy of her heart—"My Saviour!" for He spoke her name. And it is not otherwise with you. Every time you strive to be righteous—to bless a fellow creature—to sacrifice yourself, that you may give out the life God hath imparted to you, not looking for reward, but caring only to be more and more like God, and to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect; that feeling within you, as though it were written in a book, is written with the pen of God's Spirit. It is the work of God's Spirit. The joy you feel is the joy of God's Spirit. Blessed, indeed, are your eyes "which see the things that ye see; for many prophets and kings have desired to see those things and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them." So, in all prayer and Holy Communion with God and meditation over His Holy Word, we grow with what we feed on. And we know, that as we use these gifts aright, God does give us to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. Thus, our Good Shepherd is ever going before us. Thus may we, in thankfulness, in humble joy, in a bright and happy spirit, follow His gracious guidance—not fearing wolves on this side or false pastors on that; but clinging close to Him, making sure of Him. Thus we can, indeed, say, "Oh God, that Spirit whom Thou hast made known to me, He is the good Spirit; and, therefore, shall I lack nothing!"



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN

[No. 25.]

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV.

THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER,

(A. P. STANLEY, D.D.)

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 7, 1872.

(With special reference to the death of the late Professor Maurice.)

"Peace be unto you."—St. John xx, 19.

How curiously full of meaning are the different forms of salutation with which travellers along the course of life have, in different countries and ages, greeted each other as they met, or as they parted. The joyous Greek used to say χαίρε! that is, rejoice, take a happy, cheerful view of what is before you; look forwards and not backwards! look upwards and not downwards. The sturdy Roman use to say, *Ave! Salve! Vale!* be alive, be healthy, be strong to surmount all enemies and difficulties that you may encounter, override and trample them down! The serious German, Saxon race, used to say, "farewell," fare-on, travel on as best you can along this dark uncertain mysterious road, travel well, walk well, walk discreetly, and then, whatever betide, it shall be well with you. The Christian of modern times, whether in English, German, French, Spanish, or Italian, says "Good day!" "Good evening!" "God bless you!" "Adieu!" "Good bye!" That is God and God's goodness be with you; we commend you to a better guidance than ours. Go on towards God, and may God and all good go on with you.

Such are the meanings of these common forms, every one of them is good in itself, they are all good to be remembered, if only for the sake of the force of feeling and hope and prayer that we may all of us from time to time throw into words which have come to us almost as a matter of course. But there is yet one other form of salutation familiar to us, not through our own usage, but familiar to us through the Bible, and which is still universally used in the East—"Peace be with you!" That is, peace to the traveller amidst the ceaseless wars and feuds of the tribes of the desert. Peace from the robbers by night, peace from the enemy's snares, peace from the quarrels which embitter life, if they do not destroy it; from the alarms which destroy our comfort if they do not destroy our life. It was this salutation in which our Lord chose to express His best wishes for His disciples both on the night of His parting from them before His death, and as we read thrice over in the service of this day when He met them again after His resurrection.

Let us then take this as our Easter salutation to you as we meet this great congregation again at the beginning of these Special Evening Services. And if this salutation should be tinged at this moment with the fresh memory of a high and holy life which has just been withdrawn from the English Church and Nation, let this give additional meaning to the different senses in which I shall endeavour to impress it upon you.

"Peace I give unto you." It was, as I have said, no new expression when our Lord used it, and herein lies the first lesson which it teaches. It was the common form of Oriental salutation, heard a hundred times a day in the streets of Jerusalem and on the hills of Palestine. But He, our Lord and Master, did not on that account disdain it. He chose it because it was old, because it was easy, because it was familiar, because the world used it. The world with all its faults is, in a certain sense, a good, kind world still. It does wish us well; it would not willingly do us any harm; its forms and its phrases are not to be despised or set at naught. The Church too is a venerable society, full of good works and sacred words; but there is often just that wanting in the words of both which we feel our Saviour meant when He said—"Not as the world giveth, give I unto you peace." The World wishes us well, congratulates us, condoles, with us, and gives us peace; but it is too busy, too much engrossed with its own concerns, too full of hurry to think of what it says and of what we feel; it passes on, it pushes us aside, it leaves us behind, it deserts us in our hour of need, it presses our hands for the moment, it blesses us for the instant, and then it is far away. The Church too has its words of peace, but they also have often so drifted from their first significance, from their first love, from their first

fire, that they have ceased to reach the soul; the popular meaning has driven out the real meaning, the superficial letter has often killed the inward spirit; there is a hollow ring, a false note about them—they are become a tinkling cymbal; but not so the Divine peace of our blessed Saviour, and of those, whether in the Church or the world, who in any degree share in His Spirit—"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." The word is the same, but the meaning is different. It is the very object of all true religious teaching to stamp these common, well-known words with deeper and more serious senses. Let us then see what some of those senses may be.

"Peace I give unto you." First then, there is peace with ourselves. What is, in a true Christian sense, this inward peace? We may be in constant struggle, worn by care, borne down by distress for others, misunderstood, misrepresented, the sin and the misery of mankind pressing upon us with a constant burden, and yet there may be seen in the character, in the very face, in the eyes, in the whole demeanour of such an one the unmistakable proof that in the midst of struggles, in the midst of anguish, he is yet in the very depths of peace. "Keep innocency," as we have heard in the Psalm of this evening—"keep innocency and do the thing which is right," for that will bring a man peace at the last. To have said the right thing though it cost us an effort, to have done the right thing though it seemed hard at the time, this leaves a tranquility behind which long outlives the moment and makes us feel as if in a haven of perfect rest. This—this we may say with reverence, was what the Apostles must have seen, felt and heard in the peace which shone through the look and the tone of Him who spoke to them. He had done His Father's will to the end, and, therefore, His peace was perfect peace. They saw in His face no marks of a tormenting conscience; they heard in His voice no traces of divided allegiance; He was at one with Himself, He was at one with His Father, and He makes us, if we will, to be at one with both.

The second peace which He came to give us is peace with one another. He, Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, was the great peace maker. He came to reconcile man to man, nation to nation, Church to Church. In Him Jew and Samaritan, Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian were one. He saw the good in publicans and sinners; He bore with the infirmities of the weak; He gathered round Him, in the closest communion, characters the most opposite, each from each—Peter the rough fisherman, John the loving friend, Thomas the doubting sceptic, Joseph the rich counsellor, Paul the energetic free-minded preacher. In peace also every one of us may take a part. It

does not mean, it cannot mean, that we are all to think, and speak, and act in exactly the same way. That is impossible, and the world would be a very dull world, very different from what God intended it to be if it were so. The world of nature derives its beauty and its grace from its ups and downs, its rents and fissures, its straits and seas, its mountains with their thousand shapes which cut it asunder and give to it all its various forms. And so it is with the world of man. We *must* differ. We cannot make all men to be of the same characters, of the same opinions, of the same tastes; but here as in the natural world we can, we ought to prevent any differences, except the difference of sin, from becoming a fixed separation. There was a name, a well-known name, which was given in the old Pagan religion of ancient Rome to the chief minister of its religion—the name of Pontiff. Those who were invested with Pontifical power, and from them the name has in some instances been transferred to certain parts of Christendom. The name as it was first applied had a very homely meaning. It meant *the makers of bridges*. Why it was so used, in the first instance, we hardly know. They were, perhaps, specially employed in constructing those mighty instruments of earthly peace and civilization, the creation and erection of the great roads and bridges by which those old Romans tamed and subdued the world. But in a moral and spiritual sense we ought all to be makers of bridges always. Pontiff or no Pontiff, minister or no minister, every Christian who would walk in his Master's steps, but especially those who may be called, in any sense Pontiffs, those who do hold a high place in the Christian Hierarchy, and most of all those who by their noble spiritual gifts have the power to reconcile and bring together their fellow men—those are Pontiffs always. There cannot be in the best sense of the word a more truly priestly, a more truly Pontifical work than bringing men together. It may be difficult, yet nature herself helps us. In the outward world many is the natural bridge, so to speak, which is afforded to us, as in the rivers and ravines of the earth we find here a fallen rock, there an island in the midst of a stream, here two projecting cliffs on either side; so also it is in the wide rents of human character and of human thought. Sometimes there are opinions shading off one into the other so that you can hardly tell where one ends and the other begins. These are the branches that are entwined over the abyss in one continual chain. Seize hold of them, and so bring together the two extremes by the innumerable links which lie between, and which thus bridge the whole intervening space. Sometimes, again, there are points of character the very counterpart of our own. These are the stepping stones on which we may tread securely in passing from one side to the other of those chasms.

Sometimes, again, there are concessions made, or which might be made on each side which bring us almost close to those who seemed at first sight parted leagues asunder. For all such concessions give the freest, widest scope. Build up—as the old proverb says—build up silver, yea golden bridges for thine enemies. Always open the door wide for repentance: always make the return of those from whom you are estranged as easy, as pleasant, as natural as it is possible to be made.

There are no doubt occasions when truth and justice must be preferred to peace, whether in Nations, in Churches, or in private life. There are no doubt, differences of opinion which are widened instead of smoothed by saying, “peace, peace, when there is no peace;” but, on the whole, these are the exceptions and we must be very careful not to multiply exceptions lest we make them the rule of life. There is also no doubt whatever, that we can make quarrels whenever and wherever we like. A word or a look in common life, a phrase, a form of expression not quite familiar to us in public or ecclesiastical life, a contested right which can hardly be explained to any third person, a point of honour so minute that no one can see it except the persons concerned, a point of difference so difficult that we are lost in seeking words to put it into shape; these have been quite enough to break up families, to convulse kingdoms and to divide Churches. But remember always that though it may be, and, perhaps, is our second and our third duty to understand these, to sustain these and if need be to fight for these, yet, our first duty is to pass them by, to treat them as though they did not exist. You see what you believe to be an error; endeavour to see the truth which lies behind it. You observe a querulous look; take no notice of it. You read, or you hear an expression of opinion which you do not like; see whether possibly the same thing cannot be said in a form which you do like. You see the beginning of a quarrel; of a controversy, of a war; if possible stifle it, throw cold water on the first sparks of the flame, and keep it under before it has broken out. How very much of human life has been framed upon this sort of principle: because it is impossible to be at peace, let us, therefore, be at no peace; let us not live peaceably with any man, and let us not care if we quarrel with every man. Surely it would be much more reasonable, it would be much more saving of time, much more saving of temper, much more saving of life, much more saving of souls if we paid a little more attention to the Apostle’s maxim—“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men.”

Churches need not be united in order to be at peace with each other. Men and nations need not be alike in order to be at peace. Not as the world giveth, not as outward appearance

giveth, is the peace which Christ gives to us. It was the famous saying of a great Monarch of France, looking out on the neighbouring country of Spain, "There are no more Pyrenees." The power of the human will, the vaulting ambition of one man was—so he thought—sufficient to remove altogether this greatest of natural boundaries. But so, even literally, it may be said that Faith and Charity have power to remove mountains. Mountains of difficulty, mountains of misunderstanding will vanish before the power of knowledge, before the depth of philosophical analysis, before the courage which despises difficulties, before the insight which sees through a heart of stone. On those same Pyrenean mountains there is a huge cleft called the Breach of Roland, because it was believed to have been hewed out by the magic sword of that renowned Paladin on his return from the field of Roncesvalles. Such a Breach of Roland; such a cleft; yea the hardest granite barriers that have ever separated the moral families of mankind have been ere now cut through by the magic sword of the paladins of true philosophy, of true theology, of a true Christian discernment of the spirits of men.

There is yet one other peace which includes all the others in the peace of God. In our own hearts, in the world around us it does sometimes seem as if peace were altogether impossible. The tumults, and wars, and fightings, and quarrels, and clamour, and business, and trifles, and anxieties; all these do seem to wear out our strength, and our grace, and our repose, and our devotion. Where—where shall we find a haven of peace, apart from ourselves, apart from others, a peace which shall silence these tumults, even though it cannot bring them to an end? Let me here again use an outward figure from natural objects. It may have befallen some of you to have stood by the side of one of those brawling mountain streams which descend from our southern and western coasts into the sea. Such a stream rushes with its noisy waters down its narrow channel, every pebble rattles in the torrent, every ripple makes a murmur of its own. Suddenly the sound ceases, a deep stillness fills the banks from side to side. Why? It is the broad sweep of the advancing tide of the ocean that has checked the stream and occupied the whole space of its narrow channel with its own strong, silent, overwhelming waters. Even so it is with all the little cares, and difficulties, and distractions that make up the noise and clatter of the stream of our daily life. They go on increasing and increasing; they engross our whole attention till sometimes they are suddenly met and absorbed by some thought or object greater than themselves advancing from a wider, deeper, stronger, sphere. So, for example, it is when in private life we are overtaken by some great personal joy or sorrow. The very image

which I have just named of the brook and of the sea has been beautifully employed by our greatest living poet to express the silencing of all this earth's hopes and aims by the death of a beloved friend. So, also, it has been felt in public concerns when all petty cares and quarrels have been absorbed and drowned in the tide of public joy or public sorrow, which have rolled in upon us from the great world without. All the streams of common life—we know it well—all the streams of common life, under such circumstances, descending from their several heights, deep or shallow, turbid or clear, have been checked at one and the same moment, hushed at one and the same point. If every lesser controversy has stood still, every personal murmur at such times has been silenced by the grander, deeper interest which belonged to us all alike. As that figure of the brook and the tide in the natural world, as great joys and sorrows in personal life, as public events in the life of a nation; so to every human being are the thoughts of Eternity, the peace of God. From a thousand—thousand heights the streams of human life are for ever rushing down, all manner of obstacles meet their course; the rough rock, the broken bough, the smooth pebble, the craggy bank, each and all are enough to ruffle those shallow waters and disturb those narrow torrents. But there is, or there may be another stream advancing into each of those channels, a tide from that wide and trackless Ocean to which they are all tending; and deep, indeed, is the peace which those tides may bring with them wherever their force extends. In mere earthly matters a great excitement soon, only too soon subsides—a profound impression soon, only too soon fades away, and the brawling stream of our own concerns is again rattling over its stony bed, and the beach is left bare and squalid by the returning sea. But not so, if we will, with the tide which flows in from the ocean of Eternity. Those waters have, or ought to have, no ebb and flow; they ought to remain still and deep; they can always stay the impatient murmur of our wayward wills and thoughts, and they will at last receive the stream of our cares and troubles into their own unbroken, tranquil tide. It is so in all the thoughts that we can have of that Eternal World beyond the grave, it is so in all that brings before us the reality of that unseen state, in all that brings before us the greatness of our destinies here and hereafter. Peace—peace, was the one single word which the early Christians used to write on the tombs of their departed, as if that were quite enough: peace, rest, repose, the peace of the soul of man, because that is the peace of the Eternal God. “Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose soul is stayed on Thee.” The very measure of the greatness of the idea of God and of the things of God is the depth of the peace which that idea is able to impart.

CHURCH SERMONS.

And now may I for a few moments illustrate, enforce and explain, these general terms by the example of one single life. Such an example of the gift of peace in all its senses has been shown forth in a revered and saintly teacher, who, on the early dawn of Easter Monday was removed from this world of strife to the peace which never shall be broken. Many in this Church may possibly have seen, and many others high and low, may have heard of the life-long labours in behalf of Christian truth and Christian love, which endeared to thousands of his fellow countrymen the name of Frederick Maurice. In one sense it was a life, not of peace, but of constant warfare, of war against all that was mean, and base, and false. Wherever, and whenever, he saw or thought he saw any one wronged or oppressed he was always in the foremost rank, the champion of the fallen cause of the forgotten truth, of the things which being eternal were not seen, because they were hidden by the things which being seen, were temporal. It was a life too, not of peaceful ease, but of incessant unwearied toil; a bush ever burning, and as it burned consumed with its own inextinguishable zeal for God's house and for God's honour; a burning fiery flame that consumed the mind and the body that enclosed it. Bearing everyone's burden, relieving everyone's grief; suffering with the suffering of the poor and afflicted, struggling with the struggles of the enquiring soul. Who was weak and he was not weak? Who was offended and he burned not? It was a life also not withdrawn from the turmoil of earthly concerns, not wrapt up in assiduous contemplation. He lived in the very thick of the stirring influences of our time. He, if any one, was an English citizen even more than an English Churchman. He, whilst clinging passionately and devotedly to the ages of the past, yet was, if any one, full of all the thoughts and events of our own momentous century. Not a wave of speculation in Europe, not a public event of joy or sorrow in England, but called forth a sympathetic or indignant cry from that travailing soul. Perhaps, none of our time have, in this respect, so visibly been, as were the ancient prophets, the reflection of the movements of the age, yet themselves not led captive by them. For this is the contrast that made his life so deeply instructive, whether agreeing or disagreeing with him. In the midst of all this he was, in all those senses of which we have spoken, the most peaceful, the most pacific, the most peace making of men. Peace in himself, for amidst the strife of tongues and the war of parties he remained self-poised and independent in a world above this world, a land that was very far away; his utterances sometimes obscure, sometimes flashing with lightning splendour, yet always speaking from his own heart and conscience that which he had truly found there. Peace for others; for he was

ever striving to make himself heard and felt across the boundaries which part us asunder ; a fountain of fire which irradiated even where it could not penetrate, a trumpet that awakened even where it did not convince, a music that soothed even where it was not understood ; in every sacred word ; in all the great forms of human speech, whether of the Bible or of the Church he laboured eagerly, perhaps too eagerly, to discern not its common place earthly, party meaning, but its heavenly ideal, catholic significance. He has been in that high sense in which I use the word, a true Pontiff of the English Church, a true Paladin of the English State. He has built bridges that will not easily be broken, across the widest chasms that separate class from class and mind from mind ; he has with a more piercing sword than that of Roland made a breach in the Mountain wall of prejudice and ignorance that will never be entirely closed.

Peace in God. In that voice trembling with emotion each time that he read the Lord's Prayer or the Apostle's Creed, as though he were always reading them for the first time, as though they came to him with their original freshness yet laden with all the meaning of centuries ; in those eyes bright with faith, in the Eternal goodness and justice of God ; now fixed in defiance against all falsehood, in which the heart seemed to speak with lips of its own, the very message which he was sent into the world to deliver, and which the veriest stranger could see—"not as the world giveth, but as He gives, Who is the Giver of all that is good in every prayer, in every creed, in every truth, human or Divine." By that prophetic countenance, by that inspiring voice, by that ennobling presence, the youthful listener felt that a mind higher than his own was really feeling for him. The old man perceived, that the generations that were to come had perhaps as much to teach as the generations that were past and gone ; the student felt and saw the unity of theology with philosophy, of time with eternity ; the poor man felt that there was one, who was filled even to overflowing, with the sense of the brotherhood and the community of all men. And the secret of all this was, if we may venture to divine the secret, a trust absolute and unbroken, yet, with a full understanding of what he believed—a trust in the greatness and goodness of God, and of God's dealings with the whole race of mankind. The Religions of the world were all to him, manifestations, more or less imperfect of the religion of Jesus Christ ; the various developments of the Christian Church were to him the various provinces of the Kingdom of Christ. The three-fold names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, were not to him a dark, insoluble enigma, but a glorious revelation of the depth of the moral being of God. Believing in the truth of this revelation as positively

as the strictest Pharisee of any Jewish or Christian sect, he could afford to be as reverent as he was free, as fearlessly bold as he was profoundly humble. He was not, he could not be, afraid of any evil tidings, of any enquiry, or of any research, for his heart stood fast and believed in the Eternal God.

Such, no doubt, amidst the infirmities which encumber every human being, such was the vision of Peace which he presented to the world whilst he lived, and his reward even on earth has been, that when his end came, the strife which had been provoked by the long warfare of life, the passions which were roused by his name whilst he was amongst us, were hushed into respectful silence when he was taken from us. And amongst those who gathered around his grave, and who honoured his memory, were many who met only there, and who there met in the Peace of God. For he in whom the ancient faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel could enkindle such a bright and shining light had given the best proof of the truth that the Gospel can make us free, and that where the Spirit of Christ is, there is liberty. And from himself there came in those last hours the most touching, the most impressive, because the most characteristic of all the utterances that could have fallen from his lips. On that early Easter morning, when the end drew near, out of the extremity of bodily weakness, out of the darkness of death he gathered himself up and pronounced calmly, distinctly, and with the slight variation which was needed to include himself within its range, the solemn benediction with which the Church of England at the close of its most solemn service gives its peace, not as the world giveth—the benediction which had been endeared to him, through the long years of his own faithful ministrations, every word of which was to Him instinct with a peculiar life of its own, a peculiar reflex of his own profoundest feelings. With that benediction let me venture to conclude, in the humble hope that something of his spirit may breathe upon us through this, his last legacy, his last message to English Christendom: “The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge, and in the love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost be amongst us, and remain with us always, Amen.”



A S e r m o n

BY

THE REV. B. THOMPSON,

Vicar of Swine, Hull,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 1872.

“And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands.”—Isaiah v, 12.

The decline of religion among a people ought to be watched with jealous and anxious care, by all who profess love to Christ. Care in detecting, and zeal in removing, any corrupting influence ought to be contributed to, by every member of Christ's Church. It is lamentable in the history of Churches that the leaven of evil has penetrated their members, rather than been stemmed and rolled back by the faithful adherents of truth. More frequently we see believers assimilated to the world, than the world arrested by the Church. This ought not to be. Another thing may be remarked and that is, that the evils which impede the Christian Church, are the same in every age, only changed in colour according to the customs of the time. Readers of history cannot fail to notice that the human heart has, at intervals, revived the same principles of Unbelief, and stumbled over the same habits of society. Pleasure seeking and luxury were the first corrupters of cities. While living on simple fare in humble tents, Israel preserved itself in sober and holy allegiance to God. No sooner did they build cities or dwell in towns, then they sought luxury, invented pleasures, and proportionately gave up allegiance to God. The forms of evil may vary, but the

propensities of the human heart will repeat themselves from age to age. I believe the charge made in the text ought to be reiterated in our own times, by every faithful minister of Christ. As men become worldly the work of God is neglected. Nothing can be more unfair, nor more unsatisfactory than the way the work of God is conducted now. The worldly wisdom required, the caution you have to manifest, lest you reprove the evil, and in doing so provoke the opposition of the great, whose help you seek. All show that the world is gaining on the Church, and not chastened by it. I have lived to see, and regret the fact, that to be popular in the world means, that you say little about piety, speak carefully of the claims of God, and very gently of human responsibility. This ought not to be. And why is it so? but because men are absorbed in worldliness, and will not consider the work of the Lord, nor regard their obligation to God. This evil state is greatly attributable to luxury and the intemperate pursuit of pleasure.

In trying to draw some lessons from the text permit me, first, to note the character pointed out. Here I must again remark, what I have often done, we are not to shelter ourselves from rebuke by supposing the character meant is the dissipated blasphemer. We are not to suppose that impiety and unbelief, reckless indulgence and sensuality, form the depths of wickedness reprov'd by the prophet. It is a false refuge to say, I am no scoffer, no drunkard, I am not profane. The text is not pointing out how many sins a person commits; but how many duties he neglects. They regard not the work of the Lord nor consider the operation of His hands. Religious undertakings are allowed to advance or languish, and yet they consider not that they are accountable. Brethren, shutting our eyes to truth will not change truth; and if living in a glass house founded on sand, it is better to awake to the truth and not sleep to be awakened by the terrors of judgment. The history of all the evils that overtook Sodom, Babylon, and Persia, is a history of pride, luxury, and worldliness. So soon as men yield to the passions of the flesh and pursue the fashions of the world, all adequate sense or knowledge of the operations of a Supreme Being is gone; all serious views of life are set aside; and the end of such a career is banished from view. One false idea eclipses

all the true ; to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant is the delusive hope. Thus inflamed by a passion for Society, there is little else sought after, but how to ensure a circulation of amusements and excitements, ending in remorse and disappointment, or worse—insensibility.

It is a solemn thing to allow the world so to absorb your soul. Now do not imagine I am thinking of the wealthy, who spend their evenings in luxury, music and wine, the poor man is often equally guilty ; and working men spending their spare hours in idle groups, and corrupting each other in ungodly conversation are far from guiltless. These regard not the work of the Lord ; their minds are inactive towards all that is good ; there is a stagnation in the duties of life ; except so far as pleasures re-excite the flame of worldly animation. This is a pitiable state in which to live, and degrading to the nature entrusted to us by our God. Imagine a person void of resources within himself. The mind cannot find food for pleasurable and profitable enquiry, reflection, and hope. Such a person dislikes to be alone, is dependent on company to keep alive the flame of apparent pleasure. Is it a wise use of the faculties given ? Is it a satisfactory education of the senses of the body ? Ask Solomon, what can be got out of such a life. Yea, ask universal experience, and the response will be, that a life of pleasure and levity is illusive, dangerous, and vain. Beware then of a rash pursuit of pleasure, it will defeat its own end. “ There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the ways thereof are the ways of death. There is a path of life, the gate of which is illuminated by golden promises and enchanting ornaments, but within is misery, disappointment and death. It may be you stand without, the hall of pleasure. You hear the music and dancing, but could you look into the hearts of that festive assembly, how different would be the *reality* to the *appearance*. Many vacant minds and languid hearts ; some who were in reality fleeing from themselves, and drowning rising serious reflections in fresh engagements of pleasure. Could you see those hearts as God sees them, if you are a Christian the result would be thankfulness to God that you were excluded from the festivity. Let every wise man remember that while innocent enjoyment is lawful, there are other duties of vastly

more importance—duties of mind and soul, of influence and responsibility ; duties towards men of our generation, and towards God to whom we are accountable. Shun the society of the gay ; envy not the momentary flash of worldly pomp, soon the deluded soul must be summoned into solitude in the chamber of death ; nothing to console the vacant mind ; nothing to cheer the throbbing heart ; the rolling eye looks in vain for rest, but the life of vanity closes, and the conscience like a finger on the wall writes, “Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.”

Notice secondly, that an essential evil, attending a life like this, is, that most vital and important matters are neglected. “They regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands.” The very temper required to attach men to a gay life, is destructive to any pleasure in the work of the Lord. The spirit of mind which enables a person to follow a life of gaiety is opposed to the spirit of Christ. Now this is not saying that the work of the Lord demands perpetual austerity of manners, a daily grave countenance, and in fact a life of hypocrisy ; but is it not true that the pleasures of the world absorb the mind and produce such a temper that the heart welcomes the most fallacious reasoning in support of its coveted career of pleasures, and to drive away serious thoughts ? I say fallacious reasoning, for let any earnest Christian go from his study, where with the Bible he has been meditating and praying at the feet of our Lord, to the circle of the gay, and listen to their occasional reference to Christianity ; and you will be surprised to find how sadly they have deformed what is symmetrical, and marred what is beautiful and fair. In short, hear Christianity discussed over winecups and you will find as much difference between it, and Christ’s Gospel learnt in prayer, as there is between Paganism and Christianity. No wonder, therefore, such should grow out of sympathy with the proposals of the zealous servants of God. No two things can be more opposed than a busy life after worldly popularity, and a sober reflection on God’s government and work. For the conduct of God towards men demonstrates His displeasure at a worldly spirit, as a rejection of faith, as indifference to man’s present chequered state of grief and death ; as a waste of the

CHURCH SERMONS.

season of probation, and scorn of the example of Christ and the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. Oh! worldly man, listen to God, as He recounts how many things He has against you; how you are despising Christ's love by becoming over-attached to the world; how in order to keep pace with men of the world, you are disregarding the work of the Lord: driving away facts that speak no uncertain sound. Think of the scenes of distress, sorrow and grief; think of the sins and crimes that like a cloud darken our history. Each day Death removing thousands of our race, and thousands languishing on beds of affliction. And yet, in the midst of these powerful voices, men of the world going on heedless of the presence of God, or giving a cold patronage to His work. Thus the worldling is passing through life's important duties, with an obdurate heart to the real sorrows common to men, and regardless of the aggressive duties of the Church, in arresting the sin of the human heart. Oh! mortal man, bear in mind there is but a step between you and death. Is there nothing to call you aside, to chasten your pleasure and cool your reason. Call now on your conscience and enquire the reason of the hope that is in you. Never rest until you detect the permanent and good from the transient and delusive; and give diligence to the work of the Lord.

As operating in yourself, what has the Gospel of Christ done for you? What changes has it wrought, what tempers and actions is it creating? Are you a new creature by its powers and operations? Do you love Christ's cause and worship? God is a Spirit. Is your spirit so quickened in newness of life, that without sight you can hold communion with God by faith, through external acts of worship. What are you seeking with respect to the work of God in Christ? Are you building on self-sufficiency and self-righteousness, and thus crucifying the Son of God afresh, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? And what about the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit? By this power alone your piety can grow in warmth and life amidst this cold world.

Finally, how do you stand towards the work of the Lord aggressively? The Kingdom of God ought to begin within us, in the subjection of our hearts and thoughts to the reign of

CHURCH SERMONS.

Christ, but it must not end there. God's Church has a great work to do, and the charge to do it rests on every individual member of that Church. Each day that you rise from rest, you ought to hear the voice saying, "Go work to-day in My vineyard." Each day should be begun with the prayer, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do." Oh! men of the world, let me tell you, the only cure for sadness is working for Christ. You say you are not sad, when you are in the world and have never considered it; never realized its vice and iniquity. You cannot have considered the millions who yet refuse to surrender to Jesus the only Saviour of men.

Brethren, beloved of the Lord, come ye yourselves apart from the giddy world, consider the enemies of Christ are zealous and many. Be active, be serious, the day is far spent, the night is at hand. The period of work is passing swiftly. Quit you like men; be strong; the Judge standeth at the door.



Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

No. 26.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD THE
STRENGTH OF THE
CHURCH.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. G. H. WILKINSON, M.A.,

Vicar of St. Peter's, Eaton Square.

PREACHED AT ST. PETER'S, EATON SQUARE, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 1872.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."—Zechariah iv, 6.

The Prophet Zechariah lived at a very important crisis of Jewish History. The children of Israel had for many years been exiled from the land of their fathers. "By the waters of Babylon" (such was their pathetic wail)—"By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion."

But now the scene is changed; God in His mercy has visited His people. They have been allowed to return. A great national enthusiasm has been enkindled. The streets begin to echo with the sounds of renewed activity. Every hand is

occupied in repairing the old waste places and rearing afresh the ruined walls of the ancient Temple. Foremost in this work is the Prince Zerubbabel. He finds however that the enterprise which he has undertaken is by no means free from difficulty ; Without are bands of avowed enemies. Within are false friends, cowardly fears, and unworthy jealousies.

It is a trying time for the lion-hearted leader and his little army of faithful adherents. So the Prophet Zechariah is sent by God to lift up the hands which have begun to hang down, and to strengthen the fainting hearts. "This is the word of the Lord," he says, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel." Tell my servant that I, the Almighty, am with him. I will not leave him nor forsake him ; as *he* has laid the *foundation* so shall *his* hands be allowed to *complete* My Holy Temple. As he lays that last stone upon the building which has been reared amid so much discouragement, and watered with so many tears, songs of joy shall arise from thousands of enfranchised Israelites. "He shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it." "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord." The word of God then, as ever, stood true. The Temple, as we know, was rebuilt. The details of its restoration can be studied in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai ; but the interest of the prophecy does not cease with the first fulfilment of the promise.

The whole book points forward to the spiritual temple which was to be reared in after days by the true Zerubbabel, the Lord Jesus Christ, that Holy Building of which every Christian is intended to be a living stone, built in, either directly by the great Master Builder, or indirectly by the Apostles and ministers who labour under His direction.

Standing as we do around the half finished walls of this Holy Fabric, we find in the text first, the statement of a fact, and

CHURCH SERMONS.

secondly, a source of strength for all who are trying to advance the glory of God, either in the Church at large or in their own individual life.

I. It is now a matter of history that the Church's rise and progress cannot be ascribed to the might of human support, or the influence of human wealth. Recall for a moment its origin. A new Jewish teacher—of whom there had been many—a poor Nazarene—despised and rejected of men—without a place where to lay His head, whose earthly life began in a manger and ended on a cross. This was the worldly position of its first founder. He gathered round Him some poor people, for the most part fishermen and women of Galilee. Out of this little company He selected a few whom He sent forth as Apostles to establish His kingdom upon earth. That kingdom was recommended by no human attraction, nor glory of human pageantry.

The water from the wayside spring; the bread and the wine—the common food of every day life—these were the outward symbols of their deepest mysteries. The strength of the Infant Church was simply derived from the unseen presence of the Holy Ghost. He, the living Spirit, dwelt in that body of despised Galileans. Unseen by human eye He entered into the hearts of men and convinced them, in the words of this day's Gospel, "of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment." He drove home the preached word with such Divine force, that old, self-satisfied, hardened worldlings were compelled to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"—"what shall we do to be saved." He went forth with those first disciples and gave such reality to their Baptism, that men, women and children, who were dipped in that life-giving stream became grafted into a spiritual community, and were brought within all the blessed influences of the Holy Trinity. He was so present with them at their Holy Communions, that when the Apostles spake the words which

Christ appointed, every believing heart was strengthened with the Body and Blood of the Incarnate God.

So Christianity spread. So century after century in its own despite has the world been used as the scaffolding with which to rear this spiritual temple. So, although the oracles of Greece are dumb and Rome's most costly shrines are crumbling into dust, the religion which was founded by those peasants of Galilee has for ages commanded the homage and retained the allegiance of the most civilized nations of the world. "The weak things of the world has God chosen to confound the things which are mighty; base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence"—(1 Cor. i. 27-29) that all mankind should acknowledge the truth of His Eternal law—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord."

II. From this fact of history we derive, I think, much comfort for the future; comfort, firstly, as concerns the Church at large. It requires no great amount of intelligence to see that it is the tendency of the present day to deprive the Church of that State support which she has so long enjoyed. I hope that the day is far distant when that dis-establishment will be carried into effect. We help, I think, to hasten the very evil which we deprecate, if we allow ourselves to take up the popular cry and describe that separation of Church and State as imminent.

Because Churchmen are loathe to leave their higher work and to scream on every platform, a *shallow* politician may perhaps be tempted to underrate the amount of their strength and the reality of their convictions. It is well, therefore, that the truth should be spoken calmly and deliberately.

If the Church of England is worried much longer, her ministers will be obliged to come forth from the happier employment

CHURCH SERMONS.

of preaching the gospel and helping souls to know the love of Jesus. We shall be compelled to stand shoulder to shoulder with our people, in the quiet resolute spirit of those who have knelt before the altar of their God; and made up their mind that so far as in them lies, they will hand on unimpaired to their children the blessings of that National Church which they have themselves inherited.

Yet when the topic is so continually agitated it is well that we should be reminded of the teaching of the text, and learn the real foundation of all lasting strength, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord." The future of the Establishment is, to a large extent, in our own hands. We have nearly exhausted the force of prestige, we have nearly spent the influence which we have inherited from our forefathers. In the sweat of our own brow we must now eat our bread.

If Dissent, in proportion to its wealth and numbers, is allowed to give ten pounds for every sovereign which is subscribed in the Church; if for one man who works for the Church, ten toil for the Chapel; if the Nonconformist hastens home from the business of the City, and after his hurried meal goes out to spend his leisure in working for his religion, while the Churchman, after no greater fatigue, prefers to rest or to enjoy himself, and leaves the masses to be visited and educated by those who hate the very name of the Church, then it needs no prophet's voice to foretell the issue.

If, above all, conversions are permitted to increase in the Chapel and to diminish in the Church; if we are satisfied with a quiet, respectable indifferentism; if the Holy Ghost is not recognised in our midst; if His presence is not evidenced by that real Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which nerves men to sacrifice time, and strength, and wealth, for Him who has washed their sins away in His own most precious Blood; then the end

is not far distant. As it was with Ephesus and Laodicea, so shall it be with that part of the Catholic Church into which we have been baptized. No might of State patronage—no power of perfect organization can save it from utter destruction ; the wall that is built with untempered mortar shall fall ; the Lord God will rend it with a stormy wind in His fury. Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, and a stormy wind shall rend it.

But on the other hand, let the Holy Ghost be duly honoured ; let that spirit of vital Godliness which is now spread in our midst be still further developed ; let Holy Communions, Prayer meetings, earnest wrestlings of the individual soul in the silence of its own chamber, *let these increase and multiply*. Let the idea be fostered through the length and the breadth of the land that it is the highest life of the creature to glorify its Creator ; the greatest privilege of the ransomed ones to lay at the feet of their Redeemer, the gold, and the frankincense, and the myrrh. Let the Holy Ghost thus be allowed to rule in the Church, and I am *perfectly* happy as to her future, whatever may be her earthly position. The covenant of God will stand unchanging and unchangeable. She will struggle on in the coming ages as she struggled in those primeval days of pain, poverty and persecution. She will live to share the ultimate triumph of the universal Church, and to take her part in the great Eucharistic Hymn, which shall rise from myriads of ransomed Saints, when He who laid the foundation-stone on the blood-stained heights of Calvary, shall complete the fabric amid the over-powering glory of the second Advent. It was the *Lord's* doing—we shall sing, both heart and voice upraising—Not by might, not by power, but by His Spirit was the victory won. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

That which is true for the Church is true also for each individual. Whatever be the difficulties and disappointments in

CHURCH SERMONS.

the spiritual life by which you are cast down and disheartened, if only you will act upon the principle of the text, you shall forge out of those very trials a Divine arrow by which Satan shall be pierced through and through. You are afraid to meet your God? you have never yet felt the happiness of knowing that you are forgiven? Cry aloud to the Lord and Giver of Life "Come Holy Spirit and take of the things of Jesus and shew them to me—shew me how 1800 years ago my debt was paid by Him, who was wounded for my transgressions." Are you powerless to pray? "Come Holy Ghost, and shew me the Lord Jesus, my ever living Advocate, offering up my lifeless prayers, pleading for me within the veil." Are you timid, wavering, easily depressed, easily cast down, easily chilled by the sneers of friends, easily persuaded to abandon the high standard to which you are striving to attain? believe in the Holy Ghost. Cast yourself upon the Almighty Power of Him who transformed those cowardly men of Galilee into lion-hearted Apostles. Be strong, not in yourself, not in your Clergyman, but in the Lord and in the power of His might. The Fruit of the Spirit is joy. Uplifted by the Holy Ghost you shall look away from self, and gaze stedfastly into Heaven. That is the secret of joy. As you gaze on that Saviour, you shall feel the joy of His love streaming into your soul—you shall feel the joy of knowing that He, who is with you, is greater than all the phalanx of evil which is arrayed against you. You shall feel, even in pain, a strange thrill of happiness at the thought that you are allowed to share in *His* suffering, to bear *His* cross. When large sacrifices are asked at your hands, when mighty difficulties beset your onward path, you will regard them only as new materials on which the power of the Holy Ghost is to be manifested. "Who art thou, O Great Mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." So we shall go forward, one by one, in

CHURCH SERMONS.

the ranks of that mighty army of a regenerate Humanity, which following the uplifted banner of the cross, counts all that it has done but the earnest of the things which it shall do—that mighty army which has enrolled into its service all that is good, and pure, and true, in every land and every age. Those serried ranks from which the song of triumph rings out with an unfaltering note in the hour of its deepest humiliation because it relies not upon itself, but upon the Omnipotent God ; because it has realized the assurance of the Prophet, “ This is the word of the Lord, not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”



A Sermon

BY THE

REV. F. W. FARRAR, B.D., F.R.S.

Master of Marlborough College, and Honorary Chaplain to the Queen.

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S,
LONDON,

ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1872.

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—Micah vi, 6-8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God? It is indeed a momentous question, the most momentous that can be framed in mortal words. For as we enter deeper into the valley of life, and its rocks begin more and more to overshadow us, to what do all the other questions of life reduce themselves? To any man who has the slightest sense of Religion—to any man, who, with all his imperfections, yet solemnly feels that if life is to be life at all, every year must bring him nearer and nearer to the great Light,—to all whom the sorrows and disappointments of life have for ever disenchanted,—no hope, no thought, no question remains but this, Is God's love with me? Am I at peace with Him? In one

word, am I His ? Oh ! if not, how shall I, the lowliest of His creatures—how shall I approach Him ? What else can I care for but this ? Remove the fear of God's displeasure, and I have no other fear. Give me the joy of His countenance, and I ask no other joy. Whatever may have been the illusions of youth, they have vanished from the eyes of manhood. The winds have carried those bubbles beyond the river, or, as we seemed to touch them, they have burst ; but one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, even to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple. Wherewith then shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God ?

Many and various, in all ages have been the answers to that question, but in spirit and principle they reduce themselves to the three, which in these verses are tacitly rejected, that the fourth may be established for all time. And, therefore, this is one of those palmary passages of Holy Writ, which should be engraved on every instructed conscience as indelibly as by a pen of iron upon the living rock. It formulates the best teaching of religion ; it corrects the worst errors of superstition. Every book of Scripture, every voice of nature, every judgment of conscience re-echoes and confirms it. Happy will it be for us, if we will use it as a lamp to guide our footsteps, a law to direct our life.

(1.) The first answer is, will Levitical sacrifices suffice ? " Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old ? " that is, " Shall I do some outward act, or acts, to please God ? " Men are ever tempted to believe in this virtue of *doing* something ; to ask, as they often asked our Lord, " What shall I *do* to inherit eternal life ? ". And there are times when such external systems may, for ignorant and stiff-necked nations, be a wise safeguard. It was so for the Israelites at the Exodus, depressed and imbruted as they were by long slavery, and saturated with heathen traditions of cruelty and vice. That moral law, so majestic in its simplicity, with which Moses first descended from the flaming Mount,—was it not a significant omen that its stone tablets, even before they were promulgated,

were shattered to atoms on the mountain granite? and ere it could be written on the fleshly tables of the heart, the Levitical institutes,—so multiplex, so trivial, so intricate, so material, so burdensome,—statutes which were not good, and judgments whereby they could not live,—were best suited, intolerable as was their yoke, to a people which in honour of their brute Deity, could sit down to eat, and to drink, and rise up to play, while the body of heaven in its clearness had scarcely vanished from their eyes, and the majesty of darkness still rolled around the burning hill. There have been attempts in all ages to revive such ceremonials, or others like them, because they are easier than true holiness, and tend to pacify and appease the perverted conscience. But God's own Word about them is plain; they perish in the using; they cannot sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; nay, in so far as they are substituted for a heart religion,—in so far as they are used to compound for the weightier matters of the law,—in so far as they furnish an excuse for selfishness, for censoriousness, for party spirit—they are eminently *displeasing* to God. External observances, without inward holiness, are but the odious whiteness of the sepulchre. “Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto Me,” saith God to such, “your sabbaths and calling of assemblies I cannot away with.” Thousands, I suppose, have been asking themselves this Lent, need we fast? Yes, my brethren, if you think that you ought; and if you know, and find that by doing so you increase your religious earnestness, and strengthen your moral life. But not if you think that fasting is an *end* instead of a *means*; not if it renders you more self-satisfied; not if it makes you less active in works of good; not if it renders you less lenient to your own failings. “Eat an ox, and be a Christian,” said the Jesuit Fathers to a penitent who could not abstain from meat. What is the passionate, indignant language of the Prophet Isaiah, on this subject? “Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; is it such a fast that I have chosen, to bow down his head, as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him; wilt thou call this a fast, and an

acceptable day to the Lord?" No: fasting may be necessary, only do not take it for religion; but, on the other hand, look at home; loose the bands of wickedness, your own and others; undo the heavy burdens, your own and others; take the beam out of your own eyes; wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. *That* is dearer in God's eyes than perpetual sacrifice, holier and purer than days of unbroken fast.

(2.) If then we cannot please God by merely doing, can we by *giving*? "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Shall we like the Pagans try to bribe God? Shall we make His altars swim with the blood of hecatombs, and fill His sanctuaries with votive gold? Or shall we like terrified sinners, in the Middle Ages, think to buy off His anger by bequeathing our possessions to charity or to the Church? Ah! my brethren, I suppose that while not one of us is so ignorant as not to know the duty of charity, none of us is so exquisitely foolish, as to imagine that he can by gifts win his way one step nearer to the great White Throne. Sacrifices, to bribe Him whose are all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? Gold or gems to Him, before whom the whole earth, were it one entire and perfect chrysolite, would be but as an atom in the sunbeam! Ah, no!

"Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would His favour implore;
Better by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor."

Thou desirest not sacrifice else would I give it Thee, but Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart O God Thou wilt not despise.

(3.) If then neither by doing, nor by giving, can we please God, what *third* experiment shall we try? shall it be by *suffering*? Shall I, lacerating my heart in its tenderest affections, give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? This, too, has been frequently and fearfully attempted; frequently, and fearfully, and more persistently than

CHURCH SERMONS.

any other, because in all ages, and in all nations, men have invested God with the attributes of terror and of wrath. Could we, my brethren, judge rightly of the glorious sun in heaven, if we only saw it glaring luridly through the whirled sands of the desert, or dimmed and distorted by the hideous icefogs of the North? And can we, my brethren, judge of God—the Sun of our souls—when He looms dark and terrible through the crimson mist of haunted consciences and guilty hearts? No; when men have been able only to thus regard Him, then all the day long His *terrors* have they suffered with a troubled mind. He, the All-loving, the All-merciful, has seemed to them, cruel, wrathful, irresistible, delighting in smoking victims and streaming blood. And thus alike in sunny Greece, and stately Rome, and apostatising Israel, and scorching Africa, and in the far sweet Islands of the Sea, to hideous emblems of some savage Deity—a Moloch, an Odin, an Atua, a Sheeva,—in the rushing stream, or the molten furnace, or on the blade of the consecrated sword, has the blood of man been shed in abominable sacrifice, or his life robbed of all health and joy in horrible self-torture. Nothing seemed too sanguinary or revolting to appease the sense of sin, or dim the glare of awakened wrath.

“ Our sires knew well
The fitting course for such ; dark cells, dim lamps,
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm,
No mossy pillow blue with violets.”

They fled from the society of their fellows to vast wildernesses, or desolate hills, or wave-washed caverns. Knowing their sin, not knowing their Saviour, gazing in remorse and tears at the splendours of Sinai, not coming in humble penitence to the Cross of Calvary,—life became to them an intolerable fear. When a man feels that the eye of God is fixed upon him in anger, and he knows not how to escape, then no mountain seems too heavy, no sea too deep, no solitude too undisturbed. He says with the poet,

“ Place me alone in some frail boat
Mid th’ horrors of an angry sea,
Where I, while time may move, shall float
Despairing either land or day.

CHURCH SERMONS.

Or under earth my youth confine
To the night and silence of a cell,
Where scorpions round my limbs may twine ;
Oh God ! so thus forgive me Hell."

But has any man ever found these sufferings sufficient ? Has any man ever testified that he found forgiveness through voluntary torture ? Or is not that true which is said of the Prophets of Baal, " They leaped upon the altar, and cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner. And it came to pass that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

(4.) Not then by *doing*, not by *giving*, not by *suffering* may we come before the Lord, or bow ourselves before the most high God. Oh ! if we could thus be at peace with Him, who would not be doing all day long, who would not give all that he has, who would not cheerfully suffer, as never martyr suffered yet ? Yet let us not imagine that if men have acted thus in sincerity, it will all have been in vain. No, let us take comfort, knowing that God is love. Though not by any number of formal actions can we enter into Eternal life, yet no work done from a right motive however erroneous can be the fruit of an utterly corrupted tree. Though no self inflicted anguish can be acceptable to God, yet " agonies of pain and blood shed in rivers, are better than the soul spotted and bewildered with mortal sin." Though no giving shall purchase interest in heaven, yet the poorest and slightest act which has sprung from a true charity—the kindly word spoken in Christ's name, the cup of cold water given for His sake,—shall not miss its reward. You may remember how, in the old legend, St. Brendan, in his northward voyage, saw a man sitting upon an iceberg, and with horror recognized him to be the traitor Judas Iscariot ; and the traitor told him how, at Christmas time, amid the drench of the burning lake, an angel had touched his arm, and bidden him for one hour to cool his agony on an iceberg in the Arctic sea ; and when he asked the cause of this mercy, bade him recognize in him a leper to whom in Joppa streets he had given a cloak to shelter him from the wind, and how for that one kind deed this respite was allotted

him. Let us reject the ghastly side of the legend, and accept its truth. Yes, charity—love to God as shewn in love to man—is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice. Yet if we condemn the errors of other ages in their mode of approaching God, let us at the same time humbly remember that, better had we be at ceremonials all day long—better be giving in the most mercenary spirit of self-interest—better even be a Moloch worshipper, drowning with drums the cries of his little infant as he passed it through the fire—than to be a Christian living, as alas ! so many live, without God in the world ; living in pride, fulness of bread, abundance of idleness ; living, while they are unjust, unmerciful, uncharitable, unholy, in self-satisfied pharisaism, in gluttonous indifference, in sensual ease.

Yet if all these be at the best but unacceptable ways, what is the true way of pleasing God ? If not by doing, not by giving, not by suffering, then how ? What is the Prophet's answer ? My brethren, by *being*. "He hath shewed thee, oh ! man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?" Not once or twice only in scripture are we taught the same great lesson. "Behold," said Samuel to the presumptuous King, "behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings," said Jeremiah, "but this thing commanded I them, Obey my voice." Four times over,—thrice to the murmuring Pharisees, once to the enquiring Scribe who was not far from the kingdom of heaven—did our Lord expressly sanction the same high principle. By *being* then shall we please God ; but by being *what* ? By being correct in the pronunciation of half-a-dozen shibboleths ? By being diligent in a few observances ? By fasting ? By attending Church Services ? By saying Lord, Lord, when, all the while the heart is unsanctified, the lips uncharitable, the passions unsubdued ? No, my brethren, no a thousand times ; but by being just, and merciful, and humble before our God. It is the answer of all the Prophets, it is the answer of all the Apostles, it is the answer of Christ Himself. Justice that shall hate the

wicked balances—justice that shall recoil from oppression and violence—justice that shall loathe the small vices of gossip, scandal, and spite:—Mercy that shall make us careful

“Never to mix our pleasures or our pride,
With anguish of the meanest thing that feels;”

mercy that shall cherish for every sorrow which can be alleviated, and every pang that can be assuaged, a divine trembling, self-sacrificing love; mercy which looking neither to be admired, nor honoured, nor loved, shall live for the good of others not its own;—and lastly, a humble Reverence towards God, which shall be the source alike of that high justice, and that heavenly mercy,—oh *this* is what God requires, and thus alone can we live acceptably to him. Yea, acceptably; for this is to live in Christ. In Him was justice fulfilled; in Him was mercy consummated; in Him was such humility of reverence towards His heavenly Father that, alike on the hills of Galilee, and in the garden of Gethsemane, we see Him absorbed in constant prayer. Oh! my brethren, God needs not our services; He needs not our formulæ; He needs not our gifts; least of all does He need our anguish; but He needs *us*, our *hearts*, our *lives*, our *love*; He needs it, and even this He gives us; shedding abroad the Spirit of Adoption in our hearts. If we resist not that Spirit we need no longer be what we are; no longer what we have been. All meanness and malice, all deceitfulness and fraud, all injustice and insolence, all pharisaism and uncharity, all worldliness and lust will fall away from us, and we shall be clothed, as with a wedding garment which Christ shall give, with justice, and humanity, and purity and love. Oh! if we would indeed know how to serve Him aright, let us put away all idle follies and fancies of our own; and seating ourselves humbly at his feet, amid those poor and ignorant multitudes who sat listening to Him among the mountain lilies, let us learn the spirit of His own beatitudes—“*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.*”

Church Sermons

[No. 27.]

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

*Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.*

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 14, 1872.

"Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd.—John x, 11.

Few Gospels, if any, which are appointed during the whole of the Church year speak to us more directly, more persuasively than this. The Sunday of the Good Shepherd, as in many of the nations of Christendom this day has been called, has or ought to have a charm for the sheep of His pasture almost, if not altogether unrivalled. Now, if you look at your New Testament, you will find that in the first eighteen verses of the tenth chapter of St. John there are three distinct allegories. First comes the allegory of the Shepherd; next the allegory of the Door; lastly, the allegory of the Good or, as it may be rendered, the Beautiful or the Ideal Shepherd. These are allegories, rather than parables. The allegory differs from the parable just as a transparency differs from a painting on canvas. In the parable the narrative has a substance independent of its interpretation, and often lends itself to more interpretations than one. In the allegory the narrative suggests one obvious interpretation, step

by step ; the narrative and the interpretation being inseparable. It is impossible to look steadily at the picture without perceiving the real persons and events which it refers to moving almost without disguise or mistake behind. This might have been observed in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, which He has been interpreting for us in the second lesson ; and it will appear in the present instance as we proceed. In order to understand these three allegories, we must remind ourselves that in the East the sheepfold is not a covered building, but a simple enclosure of some considerable extent, surrounded by a wall or pallisade. Within it, many flocks of sheep, which have wandered far and wide during the day under the care of the shepherd, are collected at nightfall ; and during the night a single shepherd (here called a porter) keeps the gate and guarantees their safety. In the morning the various shepherds return to the fold, and claim their flocks at his hand. They knock at the gate of the enclosure, and he lets them in ; and then, they separate their own flocks from the others, and each shepherd leads his sheep forth to the day's pasturage. If the robber wishes to enter the fold, he does not attempt to do so by the door, where he will be recognized and detected ; but climbs over some other part of the enclosure, for he comes to kill and to destroy.

The three allegories place us face to face with the pastoral life of the East at three different periods of the Eastern day. In the first—the allegory of the Shepherd—it is still the freshness of the early morning, the dew on the ground, the shepherds returning to claim their flocks ; and if the robber is endeavouring to lead away some of the sheep, he must find his way into the fold through some dishonourable track. The porter will only open the gate to the shepherd, who calls his sheep by name ; and they hear his voice. Then he leads them forth. They follow him, because they know and trust him. The second allegory—that of the Door—places us in the full noontide of the Eastern day. The fold here implied is not the same in which the sheep were collected during the night. It is the day enclosure, to which, during the hours of the burning sunshine, the sheep may retire for rest and shade, and from which they may wander at will to seek pasture. In this allegory there is no mention of the shepherd at all. He has for the moment

disappeared. The most important feature is the door. The door is the guarantee of safety and of liberty to the sheep. "I am the door," says the Divine Speaker, "by Me if any man enter, he shall be saved, and go in and out and find pasture." In the third allegory—that of the Good Shepherd—we have reached the evening-tide. Already the shades are lengthening on the hills, and the shepherds have collected their flocks to lead them back to the night-enclosure. As darkness gathers, the flock is attacked by wolves that lie in ambush on the way. The Good Shepherd, who loves them with personal affection, throws Himself between them and their cruel enemy; and in doing so sacrifices Himself—He "giveth his life for the sheep."

Now, this allegory of the Good, or Beautiful, or Ideal Shepherd, is no mere repetition of the first allegory, although they both refer to one person only; for the shepherd who knocks at the door in the early morning is contrasted with the thief and the robber who enter by another way, and the good shepherd is contrasted with the hirling or mercenary who flies from the wolf and sacrifices his flock to his personal safety. We ask ourselves the question, what would our Lord's hearers, if they understood what the two meant in the first instance, understand by this language. We must look for the answer in what was actually going on at the time in Judea before the eye of the Speaker. When He spoke of the fold, every religious Jew would think of the commonwealth or Church or nation of Israel. The old theocratic nation was the fold of Jehovah. And when He spoke of the shepherd, every religious Jew would think of the expected Messiah. In the twenty-third Psalm, David applies the figure to the Lord Jehovah:—"The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing." And Jehovah is—in both Ezekiel and Zechariah—announced as destined to appear once more to His people as the "Shepherd of Israel." In the latter especially, He is represented as making one last effort to rescue His flock from slaughter. He only attaches Himself to the poorest of the flock, and receives thirty pieces of silver—the wages of the lowest staff—as He leaves them to the bad shepherds. The whole of this picture was especially before the mind of our Divine Lord when He was presenting these allegories. He was Himself in His own thought, the very

Shepherd of prophecy, who had come to the gate of the Jewish commonwealth to find out His sheep and lead them forth.

But who was the porter? - Among various explanations, one answer would have occurred at once to those who heard our Lord speak—to those who knew the history of the time—which cannot but occur to any one of us who has carefully studied St. John's Gospel. It was to John the Baptist the last of the Prophets, keeping the gates of the ancient fold, that Christ came as the morning was breaking on the earth. From his followers He received His earliest disciples. John the Baptist bore Him witness.

And who were the thieves who had not come into the fold by the gate? We cannot doubt that they were the Pharisees who had established among the Jewish people their great authority by much hypocrisy and violence. They had not entered by the gate. Their influence was not based on the old law of Moses, but on bad traditions which had grown up around that law, and which they had fostered, and the Baptist, when he encountered them, had not kept any sort of terms with them. "They were," he said, "a generation of vipers, whom he warned to flee from the wrath to come, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance." The whole scene of the first allegory is laid at the commencement of Christ's ministry. In the second, He has led out His own from the old Jewish fold into the pastures of the new kingdom. No shepherd is mentioned here. Christ is the Door. The new fold is the Gospel enclosure, in which He is everything. Through Him the sheep go forth for pasture, and retire within for safety. Here again He contrasts Himself with the Pharisees. The image of the Door melts away into His own actual person. And in the third allegory, the last days of His ministry, which were actually passing, were before Him. The evening of His earthly life is upon Him. He is near His Passion. The wolf is already lying in ambush for the flock. The hireling shepherd flees—true to his nature. The Good Shepherd gives His life. Who is the wolf here? As always—the Pharisee party. Who is the hireling? Certainly not the Pharisee, against whom the hireling is the only defender. Our Lord would have understood by the hireling the Jewish priesthood. It is a mistake to suppose that the religious errors of the two were identical. The

Pharisees to a great extent were a lay sect ; and they had obtained influence over the religious life of the people and corrupted it. The priesthood ought to have held them in check. They were not indisposed to believe in our Lord. Before the Passion " many of the chief priests also believed in Him." But they did not dare to face the Pharisees ; and Jesus was the victim of Pharisaic indignation. It was plain what would follow. Our Lord knew. But even an ordinary observer of the forces then governing the political life of Judea must have understood the words—" I am the Good Shepherd : the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

When our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, is He using a title that has lost its value since He has ceased to live visibly on the earth ? Or has the title a true meaning for us now ? Here, we cannot but observe that, writing some forty years after the Ascension, St. Peter, calls Him a Shepherd, and St. Paul calls Him " the Great Shepherd of the sheep." And in the first ages of the Christian Church, when persecution drove the faithful from the streets and public places of Rome, down into the catacombs, burrowed out beneath the busy life of the Pagan city ; one figure more than all others they delighted to draw in the vaults in which they prayed—the figure of the Good Shepherd. Sometimes the Apostles were ranged alongside of Him. Sometimes the sheep were standing around, with upturned faces, dependent upon their Deliverer and Guide. Sometimes He was carrying the wanderer on His shoulder, or holding the lamb to His bosom, or leading the weak of the flock, all expressing the tenderness and the active love of the Saviour, moving among His flock to bless them. And ever since those early days, when Christ has been asked to bless from His throne some work of mercy, to relieve the suffering, to teach the ignorant, to deliver the captive, it has been as the Good Shepherd of humanity. The title has an attractive power for the Christian heart which is all its own. Not that it is easy to enter into the full force of this beautiful image. To do so, we must know something really about ourselves—something really about the person of our Saviour. We must feel first all our weakness, all our dependence, and all our need of a heavenly Guide and Friend. We must sincerely feel that, face to face with the Eternal

world and its awful Monarch, self-reliance and self-sufficiency are a great mistake. The old pagan Roman did not, could not feel this ; and therefore in his unconverted state he spurned the idea of a Good Shepherd, whom it was his business to love and worship. It was humiliating to him. It was intolerable that one, who had the blood of the Cæsars and the Scipios in his veins, should speak of himself as a sheep. To him, the Christians who could do so, appeared poor-spirited, degraded, contemptible people, who had never known the majesty of the Roman name. What did he want with a shepherd ? He depended upon and trusted himself ; and if life became intolerable to him, and he was one of the sect of the Stoics, he meant to put an end to himself. That he should be led, pastured, guarded, delivered, was out of the question. He did not want to be placed under a sense of obligation to anyone—least of all an obligation so immense and utterly beyond discharge as this. He might have reflected that he owed the gift of existence to some higher Being, however little he knew of this Being, and that he could not repay it.

But how many of us go through our lives, without ever, or often, thinking seriously of what it is to be created Beings, and what it is to have a Being whom we name our Creator—a Being to whose free bounty all we are, and all we have, is literally due ! What wonder then, if the old Pagan Roman did not enter—what wonder if some of us do not enter—into the blessedness of devotion to the Good Shepherd ? Until a man's heart is broken by the sense of personal sin, and by the love of God revealed to the soul in all His beauty and all His justice, the figure of the Good Shepherd must be repulsive ; because it reflects upon the man, the sense of an immeasurable personal humiliation. Besides, we must know and believe something about the person of Jesus. If Jesus Christ was merely a man, how could He, in any rational sense, be the Good Shepherd to you and to me ? It is now eighteen centuries and a half since He left this planet ; and if we only think of Him as a departed Saint, somewhere in the bosom of God, we have no reason whatever to attribute to Him a pastoral interest in the number of Christians who look up for help and guidance to Him day by day, as He sits upon His throne. Can we suppose that any *merely*

created Being could be thus a superintending Providence, an all-contemplating, all-embracing providence to Christians? Yet, when He says, "I am the Good Shepherd." He disengages Himself from the historical and political circumstances which surrounded Him. He will be to all the Jews what He is already to the faithful few in and about Jerusalem. When He says, "I am the Life," "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," or, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," or "I am the true Vine," we feel that all this language, in the mouth of a merely human teacher would be pretentious, inflated, insufferable. We cannot conceive the best man we have known in life permitting himself to speak of himself as the Good Shepherd of men. He would forfeit his claims to our love, our reverence and our respect. Why is it not so when our Lord speaks? Because there is that in Him, beyond and yet inseparable from, His perfect manhood, which makes it not pretentious, inflated, or blasphemous in Him, but perfectly natural and obvious. We feel that He is Divine; and such sayings as "before Abraham was, I am," "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," "I and the Father are one," are in the background of His thought, and explain and justify what He says about Himself as being the Shepherd of human souls. But it is because He is also Man that such a title especially befits Him; because He is no abstract Providence, but a Divine Person, who has taken part in our nature, communes with and blesses us.

Let us, very briefly reflect what this truth involves, as to our relations with our Redeemer, as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep. He knows us individually, and He knows all about us, not merely as we seem to be, but as we are. Others look us in the face day by day, and we them. They touch the surface of our real life; perhaps they see a little way below the surface, but "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" What do they know of what passes in the inmost sanctuary of the reason, of the conscience, of the heart? Nor do they know much of our outward circumstances, our trials, our struggles, our difficulties, or what we deem such. Citizens of this vast metropolis, we live amid a multitude, yet in solitude; but there is one Being who knows all, upon Whom nothing that passes is lost, to Whom nothing that affects us is

matter of indifference. To Him "all hearts are open, all desires known;" from Him "no secrets are hid." All the warps of our self-love, all the depth and corruption of our hearts, all we might have been and all we are, are spread out before His eyes like a map, to which each moment adds something He has anticipated, adds in the way of extent, without diminishing its clearness. Because of this He is able to help, to guide, to feed, us, if we will to save us, aye, to the uttermost. And He has a perfect sympathy with each of us. He is not a hard guardian who sets Himself to keep us in order without feeling for our individual difficulties. "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities." His warrant is His perfect human sympathy, to which the image of the Shepherd, taken alone, does less than perfect justice.

Nothing which affects us is a matter of indifference to His tender heart. He is not interested in the noble, the wealthy, the intellectual, or the celebrated, alone. Wherever there is a human soul seeking the Truth, a human heart longing to lavish its affection upon the Eternal Beauty, there He is at hand; unseen, yet energetic, entering with a perfect sympathy into every trial, anticipating in ways we little dream of, every danger. Not suspending our probation by putting us out of the reach of temptation, but making a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. But this—guided by perfect prudence and the highest reason in the days of His earthly ministry—this was especially observable—He dealt with men according to their characters and capacities. He did not put the new cloth on the old garments, or the new wine into the old bottles. He did not ask His disciples to imitate the austere life of the Baptist. He knew them too well. He said, that would come to them by and by. He did not tell them all He had to tell at once, about Himself, about His living and the means of living the Divine life. This would have been too much for them, if it had been told at once. "I have yet many things," He said, "to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come." Those who were yet in the infancy of the Christian life, He would feed with milk.

CHURCH SERMONS.

He reserved strong meat for those who knew and could bear more. So it has been since. If we have enjoyed or been denied, this has not been by *chance*. The Good Shepherd who knows us has ordered it. He has proportioned our duties, our trials, our advantages, our drawbacks, to our real natures, capacities and inmost characters. Certainly the characteristic of His government is "As thy days thy strength shall be." So runs His most gracious promise.

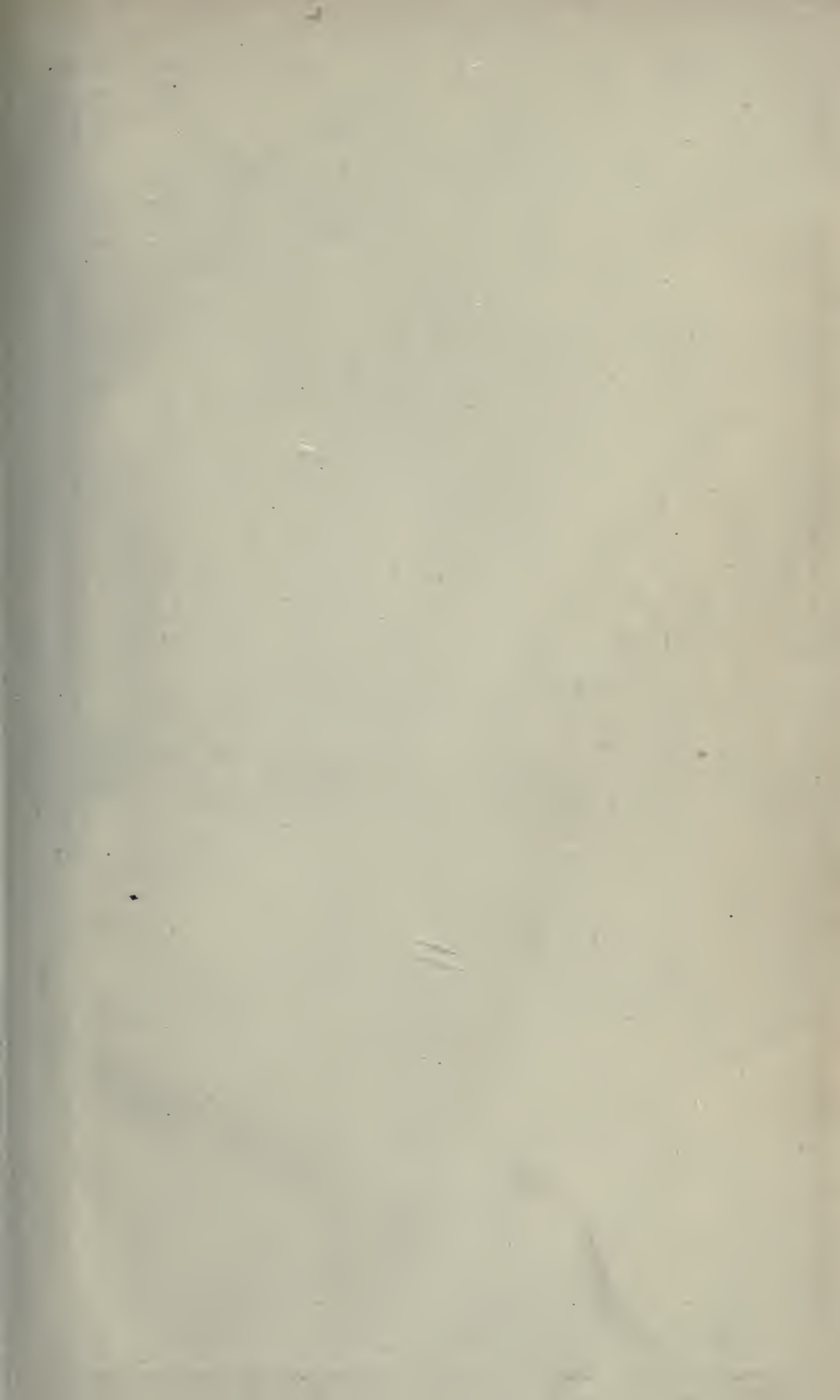
Above all, He is disinterested. He gains nothing by watching and guarding such as we are. He gains nothing by seeking us. We contribute nothing to His majestic glory. He seeks us for our own sakes. He spent His life among the villages and hamlets of a remote province, when He might have illuminated the intellectual centres of the world. He spared Himself no toil, He had no leisure; persecutions, humiliations, rebuffs, sufferings, could not diminish the ardour of His sacred and consuming zeal, and He crowned All, by embracing with the utmost freedom—when He might have avoided it—an agonizing death, in order to save His flock. He gave His life for the sheep once for all. Eighteen centuries have gone by, but His death is as powerful to deliver now as then. Self-sacrifice like that on Calvary, does not lose its virtue in the lapse of years. The precious Blood does not fail us now, more than then. For it is the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep has been raised from the dead, that He may plead for us perpetually on earth and in the courts of Heaven.

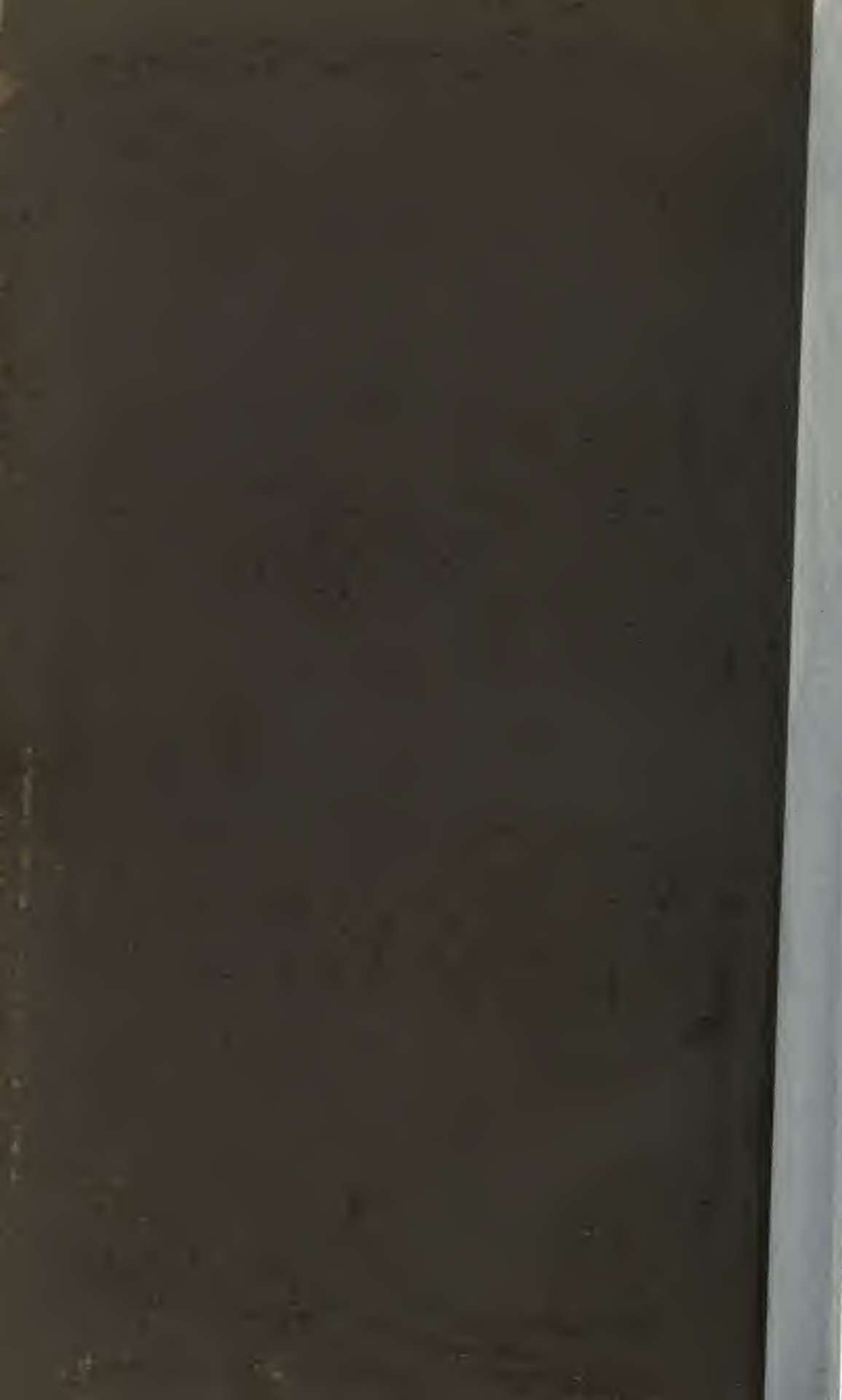
Ah! we look up to Him on His throne, and here in His courts we sing—"We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Do we mean that? We kneel day by day and confess that we have erred and strayed from His ways—and the Eternal Father's ways—like lost sheep. Do we mean that? If we do, have we returned with anything like sincerity to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls? If we do, are we endeavouring to know Him as, He certainly knows us? We need a guide through the uncertainties of life. Do we recognise one in Him? We need a physician for our moral wounds; we need a source of strength in temptation, a rule and standard of holiness; an arm—a strong arm—to lean upon when we shall

CHURCH SERMONS.

pass through the valley of the shadow of Death. All these He is. All this He can give us and much more. But have we any practical knowledge of Him, which enables us to claim these blessings at His hand. When He has fixed His eye upon us at some turning point of life—when He has reached out His pastoral crook and beckoned us up the heavenly way, have we followed? Has He done so much for us, and shall we do nothing for Him? Are we associating ourselves in any sense with His work in the world? As we may all join in His intercessions, so may we all work under the mantle of the Good Shepherd. How many a word of mercy in the Church of God has that gracious, tender figure inspired, which else had been denied to suffering human beings! By our individual exertions, strengthening the hands and hearts of the ministers of Christ, by entering with sympathy and humility into cases of suffering and ignorance, which, but for His grace, might have been our own, we can all—laymen as well as clergy, women as well as men—simple and unlearned, as well as intellectual—have a part in promoting that great work of ministration and care for fallen man which is the glory of our Divine Master, as the Good Shepherd of humanity, and which is our own only ground of hope, in Time and for Eternity.







332042 RTheol

C

Author

Title Church sermons by eminent clergymen. vol. 1.

University of Toronto
Library

DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET

Acme Library Card Pocket
LOWE-MARTIN CO. LIMITED

